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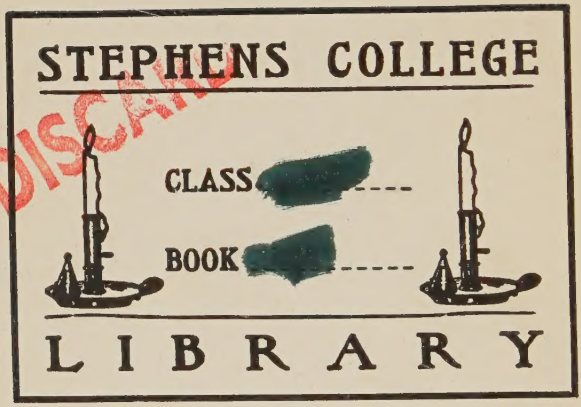
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THE MODERN STUDY OF LITERATURE

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THE MODERN STUDY OF LITERATURE

AN INTRODUCTION TO LITERARY THEORY AND INTERPRETATION

By

RICHARD GREEN MOULTON

Professor of Literary Theory and Interpretation in the University of Chicago

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TO

JOSEPH JACOBS

UNIVERSITY CHUM OF MY EARLIER YEARS AND
LITERARY COMRADE IN MY WORKING LIFE

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

IN ADMIRATION OF HIS VERSATILE SCHOLARSHIP AND
LITERARY BRIGHTNESS, AND IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWL-
EDGMENT OF MUCH HELP DERIVED FROM HIS COUNSELS

PREFACE

To write a book, it seems to me, is sometimes a less difficult task than to hit upon the right title by which the book may be announced. The difficulty is aggravated by the author's consciousness that out of the unlimited number of readers who, conceivably, might be interested in the book, the vast majority will never get any farther than the title. In the present case, what I most desire my book to accomplish is that which is expressed by the sub-title—I desire it to be an introduction to literary theory and interpretation. But if I think so to announce it, I am met by the reflection that in the present generation of readers only a very small number—quite a negligible quantity—have any interest whatever in literary theory, nor do they think of literature in general as a thing to which interpretation applies. There is perhaps more of appeal in the suggestion of a wide disparity between the traditional study of literature and the high standard set by other modern studies. But if I elect to lay emphasis upon this, I am in danger of giving to what I say a polemic color, which is the last thing I should desire. And if—as I have done—I seek to unite the two suggestions, I forego at once the brevity which is the soul of more things than wit; and I place myself in the predicament of those who try to sit upon two stools, with a disconcerting prospect of falling between them.

For a period now of over forty years my life has been wholly occupied with the teaching of literature; partly in university classes, partly in the attractive sphere of university extension, where one encounters students who are both receptive and mature. It has always been my ambition to make some contribution toward the shaping of this study of literature, which by tradition is so miscellaneous and unorganized. Previous works of mine have been preliminary studies; discussion of

particular principles in application to special literary fields. The most obvious defect of the study is the absence of any instinct for inductive observation, such as must be the basis for criticism of any other kind. My first book was an attempt to illustrate such scientific criticism in the most delightful of all literary provinces, the plays of Shakespeare. This *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* was, at a later period, supplemented by *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Thinker*, which discussed the philosophy of life underlying the dramatic stories, and illustrated the general principle that fiction is the experimental side of human philosophy. Again: the traditional study, while rightly recognizing the Greek and Latin classics as a foundation for literary culture, has in practice sacrificed the literary for the linguistic element in these classics. My second book sought to introduce *The Ancient Classical Drama* to the English reader, and to use this as a study of literary evolution. But there is another defect in our traditional study of literature which is appalling in its gravity—the omission of the Bible. It is not only the spiritual loss to academic education; the literary forms of the Hebrew classics, rich in themselves, and the natural corrective to the purely Greek criticism founded by Aristotle, have been entirely effaced under the mediaeval arrangement of the Bible in chapters and verses which is still retained in current versions. My third work was on *The Literary Study of the Bible: An Account of the Literary Forms Represented in the Sacred Writings;* and, following this, twelve years of my life were occupied with editing *The Modern Reader's Bible*, and the investigation of literary structure which this involved. My last work was an attempt to grasp the whole field of literature, not as an aggregation of particular literatures, but in the conception of *World Literature* as seen in perspective from the English point of view. In succession to these separate studies the present book seeks to arrive at a synthetic view of the theory and interpretation of literature.

I have gone into these details in order to make clear the design and use of the book which follows. An eminent teacher of literature was accustomed to impress upon his students that "a general principle is as gas in the mouth of him that knows not the particulars." This touches what is the perpetual problem for the art of exposition—the question exactly how far to go in discussion of individual literary works, which have an interest of their own, in offering these as elucidation of literary theory. It would be possible to write a work which would be wholly theoretic; but this would not only make a dull book, it would further be a sin against the foundation principle that our first duty to literature is to love it. On the other hand, if in so large a field one surrenders freely to disquisition on literary masterpieces, the connected thread of philosophical theory is lost in the particulars. For philosophy is only a fine word for seeing things in their true perspective. The natural solution seems to be the plan here adopted: a single work devoted to literary theory, discussion of particular works being reduced to what is essential, supplemented by other works in which special portions of literature are followed out in detail. In the footnotes to this book I make references to other works of mine by which study of particular points can be carried farther. Very occasionally I have incorporated in this work tabular or other matter from my other books; for, while it may seem questionable taste for an author to quote from himself, yet it seems a pity to seek out a second best illustration when a better is available.

It is natural to ask, for what readers this book is intended. The choice is usually between academic circles and the general reader. But in the case of literature I doubt if this distinction applies. The machinery of scholastic teaching seems favorable to method and thoroughness, but this is countervailed by the academic bias toward specialization; the general reader retains his breadth of view, and, while voluntary study is under

temptation to be discursive, it is open to each individual to correct this by self-direction. Our universities seem to be tending more and more to become professional schools. On the other hand, there are many signs of the times which are favorable to general culture. It is an age of Public Libraries: and every library is a university *in posse*. The enterprise of leading publishers is doing excellent service in making the whole world's literature accessible; and it is a special note of the present time that the highest scholarship will devote itself to transplanting literary masterpieces from one language to another in translations which are themselves literature. In writing this book I have steadily kept before me the purpose of making it serviceable in university and school classrooms. I have also tried to make it interesting to the general reader. And the readers I should most wish to serve are those who have recognized their college graduation, not as the goal, but the starting-point of a culture with which the leisure time of their whole lives may be filled.

RICHARD GREEN MOULTON

July, 1915

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INTRODUCTION

DOMINANT IDEAS OF MODERN STUDY

INTRODUCTION

DOMINANT IDEAS OF MODERN STUDY

The purpose of this work is to discuss the study of literature: what it must become, if it is to maintain its place in the foremost rank of modern studies. Some measure of review is necessary of what by tradition the study of literature is at present: the spirit of this work, however, is expository, not polemic. Such discussion involves the whole theory or philosophy of literature, which at one time was deemed important, but which has of late years fallen strangely into neglect. As it appears to me, there are three fundamental points in which the study of literature has fallen behind the general spirit of modern thought.

The first of these is the failure to recognize the unity of all literature. The present conception of the study is a tradition dating from the Renaissance. This was a very special epoch, which may almost be looked upon as an accident of history. The rising literatures of Europe, still in an inchoate stage, had been confronted with the mature and splendid literatures of Greece and Rome, suddenly recovered in their fulness. For a generation Greece was the schoolmaster of Europe. No classics of front rank were available except in Latin and Greek; the one literature which might have rivaled these, the Bible, was potent as to its matter and spirit, but could not influence literary form on account of the mediaeval setting in which it appeared. It was a great scheme of education and culture which thus united the linguistic discipline of the dead languages with the vital masterpieces of ancient literature. But in course of time other literatures rose to high rank, and claimed attention, though they were studied only from the classical

point of view. Other studies, distinct from that of literature, multiplied, and invaded the educational curriculum: reducing the portion of the whole that could be allotted to classical literature, reducing in the main the literary element of classical study, which begins only when the difficult languages have been mastered. The situation could be met only by specialization; and hence arose the departmental scheme of study which still obtains—the arrangement by which different students in different classrooms are engaged with Greek, Latin, Oriental, Romance, German, English literatures, studying these in connection with the respective languages, and with much else that is important but is not literature. It is clear that a study of literature so divided cannot, even under the best circumstances, rise above the provincial; for a large proportion of those who enter into it it becomes little beyond a study of language. Such breaking up of the whole field into independent departments would not be tolerated for a moment in a study of philosophy, or a study of history. Specialization of the same kind belongs to the pursuit of the natural sciences. But here the ever minuter subdivision of the field, essential for the investigator, is balanced by an ever growing sense that the Nature which is being examined from so many points of view is one and the same. There is no such catholic grasp of literature: no tendency to correlate one literature with another, modern with ancient; no instinct of perspective which seeks to view particular questions as they arise in the light of the study as a whole. Literary study remains a country without a map. Hence the unity of literature becomes the first postulate for sound literary study.

In addition to this consideration, there are two master ideas of modern thought which will be found to have only slightly affected the study of literature as it obtains at present. These are inductive observation, and evolution. As to each of these some explanation is necessary.

The attempt is sometimes made to depreciate the importance of inductive method as a characteristic of modern thought. It is claimed that modern observers do not in fact proceed on the system formulated for them by Bacon; that logical processes which are the converse of inductive have a large space in the field of modern science. But such objections seem to be beside the mark. The question is not one of logic, which is concerned with the possible modes of thinking, but with the habits of thought which, at particular times, are found to prevail. The modern observer does not think in the scheme of Bacon or Mill, just as the deductive philosopher does not think in syllogisms. Thinking, alike for the thinker and his reader, is an instinctive process, unconscious of its steps; it makes no matter how the successive steps have been reached—whether by system, or by intuition, or by happy chance—so long as they meet acceptance. The criterion comes when some step in the process is challenged: then it is that the deductive reasoner falls back upon his syllogisms, the inductive thinker verifies by observation of the matter in hand. In modern philosophy, induction does not supersede other modes of thought; but it serves as a standard to which, ultimately, they are referred. Deductive mathematics may be the most fitting mode of arriving at a system of moving bodies; but a leading use of that system when it is attained is to confront it with positive observation of actual moving bodies. Large portions of modern speculative thought will be in regions in which observation and verification are impracticable; such speculations will remain the least certain and convincing parts of philosophy; while, if they touch any point where observation becomes possible, by such verification they will stand or fall.

Now, of all studies, that of literature is the one in which there least appears this instinct of verification by observation of the subject-matter. A modern review will be effective by

reason of the literary skill with which it is presented; by the literary interest which the reading of it evokes. If the reader were to turn from the review to the work treated, in order to see how far this has been elucidated by what he has just read, no one would be more surprised than the reviewer. Discussions of literary theory proceed for the most part on trains of a priori reasoning: if particular pieces of literature do not harmonize with the reasoning, so much the worse for the literature. If we seek the principles on which the reasoning rests, often these have been constructed on the spur of the moment; or they are a mere tradition from the past; or they have the authority of a great name; or there is begging of the question by dogmatic pronouncements as to what good taste requires. A theory of *Hamlet* will be welcomed because it is new; or because it is extremely interesting; or because it falls in with some favorite ethical principle. No doubt it will be supported by quotations from the play—quotations that tell in its favor: if objection be made that the theory leaves large parts of the poem without significance, this can be met by the suggestion that Shakespeare was an irregular genius, who did not frame his play to please the critics of the future. The same Shakespeare is handled by those whose interest is philology, or textual criticism: it is instructive to contrast the care with which the philologist or textual critic will marshal his authorities, weigh evidence, show conscientious desire to account for apparent exceptions, with the broad generalizations of the purely literary critic, who is secure in his confidence that the theory will not be confronted with the poem it is advanced to explain. Thus, even at this late date, we have to plead—as if it were a novelty —that literary questions are questions to be decided upon evidence. Of course, in this as in other studies there is abundant room for a priori reasoning. But any study is open to suspicion, as long as it evades the verification of theory by appeal to the subject-matter.

The second of the important ideas is evolution. Of course, evolution is not a modern, but one of the most ancient of all conceptions. Not only the early philosophy of Plato, but the poetry which preceded philosophy, is full of evolution. Hesiodic poetry starts with the evolution of gods and universe. The *Prometheus* of Aeschylus is a study in evolution: the long disquisition of Prometheus on his benefits to mankind is simply the evolution of human civilization, with a startling climax in the art of divination. Not to be behindhand, Aristophanic comedy presents the Chorus of Birds singing the evolution of all things out of an embryonic 'wind-egg.' What modern thought has done is to give greater definiteness to the conception of evolution, seeing in it the differentiation by gradual process of specific varieties out of what was more general, and the reunion of species in new combinations. For our present purpose the important thing is to distinguish two mental attitudes: what may be called the static and the evolutionary attitude of mind. The static thinker is possessed by fixed ideas, or fixed standards, usually drawn from the state of things he sees around him: these he, half-unconsciously, brings to bear upon regions of thought the most remote from his own. An eighteenth-century thinker was conscious of living in a world in which individuality played a great part, yet not without some concession to social claims: with this consciousness he surveys the origin of society, and finds it in some social contract by which the individual surrenders part of his individual liberty in return for the advantages of social protection. It has not occurred to him that this individuality he was taking for granted was, historically, the late product, evolved slowly out of the social ideals he was trying to explain. A literary critic has been born into an age of books and original authors, to whom plagiarism is a sin. With such prepossessions he inquires whether David or some other person 'wrote' a particular psalm, whether Homer is the 'author' of the *Iliad*. It does not occur

to him that writing and books and authors make a particular stage of literature; that originality had to be invented, while what corresponds to plagiarism was the conventionality from which originality was an off-shoot. Whole studies have been revolutionized by turning from static principles, taken for granted as universal, to the interrogation of history for the developing principles by which its successive stages are interpreted. The static thinker will speak freely of evolution: but to him evolution means the advance up to his fixed standards, and again degeneration from them. In the other habit of mind the bias is toward the idea of process, rather than the idea of fixity: the variety appearing in things it seeks to express, not in distinctions fortified by limiting definitions, but as so many terms in a process that interprets them all. The study of literature has been traditionally static. To approach literature with the evolutionary mental attitude will bring solution for most of the controversies by which literary study has been distracted.

In what follows I propose to speak of Literary Morphology, Literary Evolution, Literary Criticism, and again to review the Philosophic and the Artistic aspects of literature. In the treatment of these subjects the foundation principles will be inductive observation of literature as it actually is, and emphasis on evolutionary processes. And the field of view from which the literature treated is to be drawn will be determined by the conception of literature as a unity.

BOOK I

LITERARY MORPHOLOGY

VARIETIES OF LITERATURE AND THEIR UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES

CHAPTER I: The Elements of Literary Form

CHAPTER II: The Fusion of Literary Elements

CHAPTER III: Literary Form the Key to Literary Interpretation

CHAPTER I

THE ELEMENTS OF LITERARY FORM

I

The primary element of literary form is the ballad dance. This is the union of verse with musical accompaniment and dancing; the dancing being, not exactly what the word suggests to modern ears, but the imitative and suggestive action of which an orator's gestures are the nearest survival. Literature, where it first appears spontaneously, takes this form: a theme or story is at once versified, accompanied with music, and suggested in action. When the Israelites triumphed at the Red Sea, Miriam "took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and dances." This was a ballad dance; it was a more elaborate example of the same when David, at the inauguration of Jerusalem, "danced before the LORD with all his might." And writers who deal with literary origins offer abundant illustrations of folk dances among the most diverse peoples in an early stage of civilization.

The ballad dance is thus the common germ of what are now the three separate arts of poetry, music, dance. While these three arts are gradually differentiating from their common point of origin, their mutual influence is seen. In poetry, the bodily movements serve for a long time as a sort of scaffolding, assisting rhythm until the mental sense of rhythm is strong enough to stand alone. In fully developed poetry the action drops out, the music has been absorbed into verbal rhythm. In the art of music, the half of it represented by songs and cantatas retains verse; the other half, orchestral music, drops both verse and action—unless the action may be considered to have left a trace in the bodily movements of the conductor.

Bodily movement makes the whole of the third art, although music may be added as accessory and accompaniment.

Such a ballad dance may be extremely short and simple. The triumph at the Red Sea consisted, apparently, of the words—

> Sing ye to the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously:
> The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Reiteration of these words, with timbrel music and dance movements, constituted the whole performance. No doubt a ballad dance, without ceasing to be such, can be much more elaborate than this. But the natural course of things is that poetry as it develops should differentiate into a variety of forms. The ballad dance remains as literary protoplasm: the primitive form up to which all other forms of literature, ultimately, may be traced.

At this point must be introduced another of the fundamental ideas in literary morphology. The four cardinal points of literary form are description and presentation, poetry and prose.

The first of these two antitheses presents no difficulty. We readily understand that a story can be conveyed to us by the method of narrative description: it is a narrator who is speaking throughout, and the incidents are conceived to be over and past before the narration commences. On the other hand, in such literature as drama the speakers are, not any author or narrator, but the imaginary persons of the story that is being dramatized; and the incidents, instead of belonging to the past, are *presented* as happening before our eyes. A story-teller can deal with the different parts of a past story in any order he pleases. But the action of a drama can never go back in time; its parts must appear successively as they happen from beginning to end. The words 'description,' 'presentation,' ought to be carefully used. It is a common mistake to say that Shakespeare 'describes' Hamlet as vacillating in

character. But Shakespeare has not told us anything whatever about Hamlet: had he done so we might have been spared many wearisome commentaries. What he has done is to contrive that Hamlet's own speeches and actions should *present* him to us, as vacillating or otherwise. The distinction is an elementary one in literary art.

The other antithesis of poetry and prose introduces us into a region of literary discussion full of difficulties, and needing great caution. The utmost confusion is found to prevail in critical discussion of these terms. The source of this confusion is very simple. In the exigencies of language the word 'prose' has had to do double duty: there is the 'prose' that is antithetic to 'verse,' and there is the 'prose' that is antithetic to 'poetry.' This has had the effect of identifying 'poetry' and 'verse' even in the most cultured minds. The readiest way to free ourselves from this confusion is to open a volume of Shakespeare and turn over the pages. The reader's eye tells him that there is in these plays as much prose as verse: yet no one supposes that Shakespeare ceases to be a poet when—perhaps in the middle of a scene—he passes from verse to prose. The ordinary usage of the terms has gone so perplexingly astray that it seems almost hopeless to recover correctness. Yet the very founder of literary criticism, Aristotle, with his usual sagacity, has uttered a warning against this very confusion.

> An historian and a poet do not differ from each other because the one writes in verse and the other in prose; for the history of Herodotus might be written in verse, and yet it would be no less a history with metre, than without metre. But they differ in this, that the one speaks of things which have happened, and the other of such as might have happened.[1]

The discrimination between the two meanings of 'prose,' and the traditional confusion of 'poetry' with 'verse,' are points of vital importance to literary theory.

[1] *Poetics*, chap. ix.

The distinction of prose and verse touches only the surface of literature. It is a distinction of rhythm. All literary language is rhythmic, but there is a difference: the rhythms of verse are *recurrent rhythms*, and force themselves on the attention; the rhythm of prose, on the contrary, is *veiled rhythm*. The rhythms that go to make verse may be determined by rhyme and number of syllables, as in English; or by syllabic quantity, as in Latin and Greek; or by parallelism of clauses, as in Biblical and other literatures; or by alliteration, as in Early English: but in all cases there is recurrence of the determining factor which makes the rhythm unmistakable. When verse is written, or printed, the eye assists the ear: there is division into lines of verse, which indicate the recurring rhythms on the principle that similar lines are similarly indented. The word 'prose,' on the contrary, has the etymological meaning of 'straightforward': there is no break in the straightforward writing of the passage to indicate anything about rhythm. The trained ear catches a rhythm in prose, the beauty of which is that it is never obtrusive. It should be added, that the rhythmic difference of verse and prose is a difference of degree: the two can approach one another until they almost meet. Though the verse of Martin Tupper and Walt Whitman is printed in lines, yet there is a freedom of movement in the separate lines which brings the effect of the whole near to that of prose. On the other hand, passages of highly rhetorical prose, such as what is called 'euphuism,' show a recurrence of parallel clauses which comes close to the rhythm of verse, and readily lends itself to printing in lines.

Although Iron
the more it is used
the brighter it is,
yet Silver
with much wearing
doth waste to nothing:

Though the Cammock
the more it is bowed
the better it serveth,
yet the Bow
the more it is bent and occupied
the weaker it waxeth;
Though the Camomile
the more it is trodden and pressed down
the more it spreadeth,
yet the Violet
the oftener it is handled and touched
the sooner it withereth and decayeth.

To the distinction of prose and verse the sister art of music shows a close parallel in its distinction between recitative and time bars. Bars divide music as lines divide verse, the rhythm of successive bars being recurrent. In recitative there are no dividing bars; yet the quantity of the notes—as minims, crotchets, quavers—imply a rhythm that is real, though not obtrusive.

The distinction of prose and poetry, on the other hand, goes down to the essential meaning and matter of literature. 'Poet' is a Greek word which signifies one who makes or creates something; the English poets used to be called 'makers.' A certain verse in the Epistle to the Ephesians (2:10) is translated in our Bibles, "We are God's *workmanship*"; the Greek original gives it, "We are God's *poem*." As God is the supreme Maker and Creator of the universe, and we are what God has created and made, so the poet is the creator of an imaginary universe, which he fills with imagined personages and incidents. Shakespeare is a poet by virtue of the fact that he has created a Hamlet, a Julius Caesar, a Battle of Agincourt; the Homeric poems create an Achilles, a Trojan War. There may have been an historical Achilles, as there certainly was an historic Julius Caesar: but the Shakespearean Julius Caesar, the Homeric

Achilles, are independent creations, which may or may not agree with the historic counterparts. Poetry thus adds to the sum of existences; the world is the richer by so many personalities and incidents when the poets have completed their work. In precisely the same way Dickens creates a Micawber and a Pickwick; our novels add to the sum of existences by the imagined life they create. Modern novels, just as much as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, are in the fullest sense poetry. In opposition to this, the literature to be called prose shows no such act of creation; prose is limited to the discussion of what already exists. If a philosopher or historian, in his work of discussing the world of actualities, should indicate a single detail as existing which in fact had no existence, he would so far have ceased to be historian or philosopher, and would have passed into the domain of poetic creation.

If, however, this fundamental conception of poetry and prose is to be held firm amid the confusion which has beset the usage of the terms, the reader will do well to fix in his mind this simple fact of literary history.

The great bulk of ancient poetry is in verse.
The great bulk of modern poetry is in prose.

When the criticism which had fallen into the confusion between poetry and verse encountered the clear fact that the same act of creation belongs to novels in prose and to epic poems, it sought to meet the difficulty by using a different word—'fiction'—to express creation in prose. 'Fiction' is simply the Latin counterpart to the Greek word 'poetry.' But this is an evasion of the issue. It breaks down at once: obviously, it does not meet the case of Shakespeare and other authors whose creative works pass backward and forward from prose to verse and verse to prose. Moreover, it ignores a fundamental fact of literary history. It is not disputed that literature at a certain stage tends to express everything—science as well as

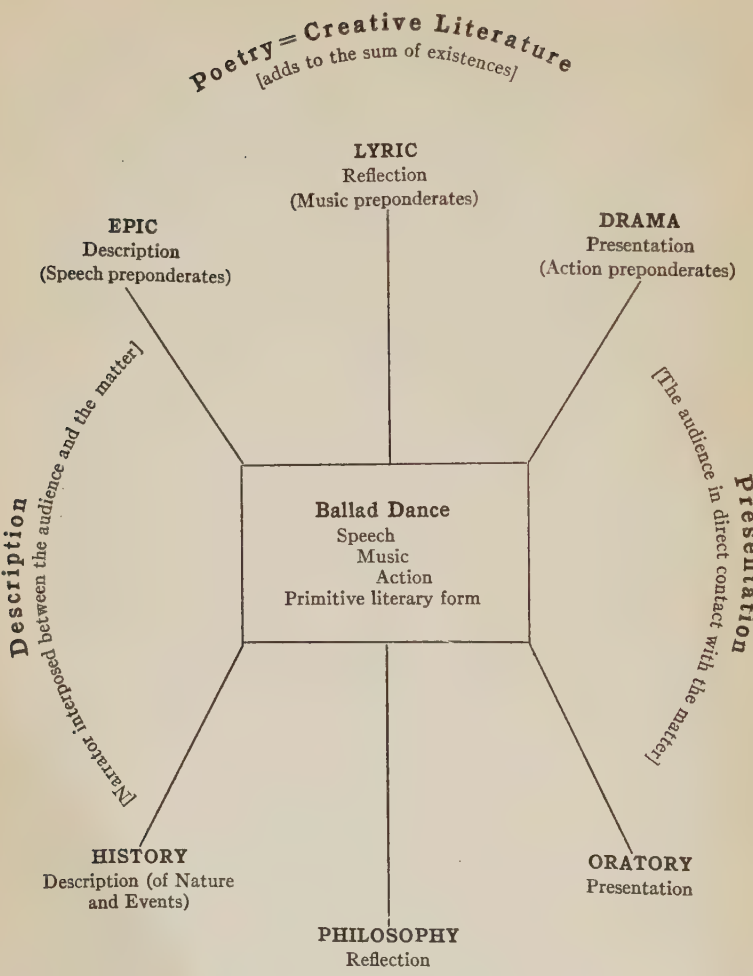
imaginative creation—in verse; at another stage its tendency is to express everything—imaginative creation as well as science—more commonly in prose than in verse. It is, of course, quite a separate question whether, when poetry is expressed in verse, the verse may not react on the creation, and modify it in some way. If this be so, then we must seek some modifying terms to indicate two different types of poetry. We are none the more excused from bringing our usage of terms into conformity with the literary facts; if the same act of creative imagination goes to make the novel and the epic or drama of antiquity, the whole must be recognized as poetry.[1]

These four things, description and presentation, poetry and prose, are the four cardinal points of literary form. They are not to be conceived as four kinds of literature; but, like the cardinal points of the compass, they represent four necessary directions in which literary activity can move. Literature, developing from its starting-point in the ballad dance, finds its movement bounded in these four directions. The result of the movement so bounded gives us the six elements of literary form.

The mutual relation of these elements is indicated by Chart I on page 18, to which the reader is now referred. Literature developing from the ballad dance moves in a certain direction and produces epic: its position in our chart indicates how this is creative poetry, in which the creation is conveyed by the mode of narration and description. Epic includes, as we have seen, alike the ancient verse narrative and the modern novel. Of the three constituents that made the ballad dance only speech is essential to epic: the earlier epic recitations

[1] On this important and tangled question a valuable discussion will be found in Professor Gummere's *Beginnings of Poetry* (Crowell), chapter ii. Mr. Gummere comes to a different conclusion from mine. But I would point out that his discussion seems in the main to be concerned with the *usage* of the term 'poetry': as to this, no doubt, the majority of authorities is on his side. I am concerned with the principles of literary theory; and I think a firm stand should be made against the traditional error. I return to this subject below, pp. 232–34.

CHART I


Poetry = Creative Literature
[adds to the sum of existences]
LYRIC
Reflection
(Music preponderates)
EPIC
Description
(Speech preponderates)
DRAMA
Presentation
(Action preponderates)
Description
[Narrator interposed between the audience and the matter]
Presentation
[The audience in direct contact with the matter]
Ballad Dance
Speech
Music
Action
Primitive literary form
HISTORY
Description (of Nature and Events)
ORATORY
Presentation
PHILOSOPHY
Reflection
Prose
as discussion of what already exists

retained something of music and imitative action, but these soon dropped away. By a movement in a contrary direction we get drama: here the creative story is presenting itself, instead of being told from the outside as a thing of the past. The imitative action of the original ballad dance has here become dominant: drama is acted poetry. If the music persists, it makes the modification of drama we call opera. The third element of the ballad dance, speech, is not absolutely essential to drama, as we see from the puppet-play. Moving in yet a third direction from the starting-point literature becomes lyric: here music has become dominant over speech, and the element of action may die out. As narration belongs to epic, and presentation to drama, so lyric produces its effect by less defined modes such as suggest reflection, contemplation, celebration.

On the side of prose, the discussion of existing things that does not create, we have three elements of literary form, exact counterparts to the three forms of poetry. History, by its position in our chart, is seen to have relations with prose and with description: natural history is the description of existing things, history without any qualifying adjective is narration of actual events. Philosophy, like lyric, is reflection; but, as prose, it is reflection on things as they are. The third form of prose literature may be termed oratory, but the word must be understood to include the whole literature of address. Whether in the form of a speech or a letter, it involves an audience or addressee: it is thus, like drama, presentation. The famous saying of the orator Demosthenes, that the first thing in oratory is action, the second and third things action also, has been ingeniously interpreted to mean, that the first duty of an orator is to be an actor; the second, to be an actor; the third, again to be an actor. The passage of Quintilian that is the authority for the dictum[1] hardly

[1] *Quintilian*, Book xi, chap. 3.

supports the interpretation: yet it may serve to illustrate the close relation of oratory to drama.

These, then, are the six elements of literary form: epic, lyric, drama; history, philosophy, oratory. But at this point care must be taken to avoid a misunderstanding which goes down to the foundation of literary morphology.

The six elements of literary form are not to be understood as so many classes of literature to which particular literary works may be assigned. They are like the elements of chemistry: in actual literature they will be found, sometimes singly, more often in combination.

Chemistry has its seventy elements: occasionally we find in nature pure oxygen, pure sulphur, pure gold; more frequently the things of nature analyze into combinations of several elements. It is so with the productions of literature: in any one literary work we must be prepared to find the elements of literary form in combination, though we may find but a single form. A play of Molière may be pure drama: the plays of Euripides, though they are for convenience called dramas, upon analysis are found to combine lyric with drama, and to show traces of epic and oratory. I am here only touching—by way of caution—upon an important principle, the full consideration of which belongs to the succeeding chapter.

II

The further consideration of these elements of form brings us to another of the foundation ideas in literary theory. It is a matter of common observation that, where literature is developing spontaneously, a long period of Oral Poetry precedes the literature of Writing and Books. The exact antithesis, however, is not between Oral and Written, but between Floating and Fixed. The stages of literary advance as regards Floating and Fixed Literature are suggested by Chart II, on page 21.

CHART II

FLOATING AND FIXED LITERATURE

Floating (Oral) Literature

1. Floating: free to vary with each repetition
2. Audience: the whole Public
3. Collective Authorship
4. Interest of conventional echoing

Fixed (Book) Literature

1. Fixed by writing: change involves new 'edition'
2. A Reading Class
3. Individual Authorship and Property in Literature
4. Interest of Originality

Floating (Periodical) Literature

1. Expansion of Printing. Floating: each issue nullifies the preceding
2. Reading universal: adjunct to Commerce and Public Life
3. Irresponsible Anonymity—Collective Copyright
4. News: Interest of the 'ephemeral'

When Floating Literature touches an age of Fixed Literature

- Part becomes material of Fixed Literature
- Part dies out
- Part is accidentally preserved as 'Fossil Poetry'

The readers of this work, and their ancestors before them for many centuries, have lived wholly in the age of books; it takes some mental effort to realize what entirely different conditions affected the literature that was uncommitted to writing. It will be understood that the question here is not the *invention* of writing, which would carry us back to elementary stages of civilization. Writing is in full use for records, for laws, for inscriptions, and many other purposes, long before it becomes natural to apply it to literature. The earlier literature came direct from the lips of the poet to the ears of the public; it was preserved by verbal tradition from poet to poet. Such oral poetry was floating literature, in the sense that it was free to vary with each successive repetition. Writing, on the other hand, fixes literature: to make a change in a book involves nothing less than a new 'edition.' A second characteristic of oral poetry is that the poet has for audience the whole public. However varied may be the gradations of social rank, the serf is as near as his lord to the minstrel, the sole source of literature: all classes of society have equal literary opportunities. When literature is committed to writing there comes a gulf between the reading and the non-reading classes; with the advent of books a large part of society is, in a literary sense, disfranchised. Again, books imply individual authorship; the world is usually more interested in the authors than in the literature. And the individual author comes to have a property in the literature he produces, a copyright protected by law. So far can this be carried that our own times have witnessed attempts to protect thoughts, and to claim property in dramatic situations. In oral poetry the only authorship is the collective authorship of a whole profession: the profession of minstrels, by whatever particular name—bards, scalds, priests, singers—the poetic profession may be styled. In the absence of writing there is nothing to connect a particular poet with a particular poem: the minstrel profession have the whole poetry in common, each

minstrel using what others produce, either repeating it or varying from it at will; and he does this without any sense of borrowing, because there is no sense of literary ownership. This is, of course, only one phase of a wider law of property. To us it appears an elementary idea that a particular person should own a particular piece of land; but we know from history that originally ownership of land rested in the community, the individual could have only rights of use. Once more, prominence of individual authorship leads to emphasis on the literary interest of originality; to be accused of plagiarism is to be accused of dishonesty. In the age of oral poetry originality has not yet been invented. The dominant interest in poetry is the opposite of this, which we call conventionality; ancient poems seek to reiterate the same stories, the same thoughts and modes of expression. What is new in oral poetry becomes beautiful in proportion as it echoes what is old.

It is a rare thing, but deeply interesting to the student of evolution, to detect an institution in the very process of developing. A transformation of this kind seems to have been preserved for us in the thirty-sixth chapter of the Book of Jeremiah. The chapter tells how the prophet is "shut up": he is either imprisoned or forced to hide himself. Under these circumstances a prophetic inspiration is vouchsafed to him.

> Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day that I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

The narrative tells how accordingly Jeremiah dictated to Baruch, and how Baruch took the roll of the book and read it to audience after audience of the people and the court. Most graphically the chapter brings out the spreading of a panic through successive circles of those who listen, until the reading encounters the callous indifference of the king, who—amid

protests from those around him—clips with a penknife the portions of the roll that overhang the reader's desk as the reading progresses, and flings the fragments into the fire. It is clear that there is some novelty in what is happening: what seems to us such a matter of course has more than once to be explained by Baruch.

> Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? . . . . He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.

What is the novelty here, and what is the source of the panic? The reader might at first be inclined to connect the growing excitement with the subject-matter of the prophetic denunciations. But this cannot be the cause: it is expressly indicated that what is written is the same matter of prophecy which Jeremiah has been regularly pouring forth for years, the very denunciations on account of which he was "shut up." Is the novelty the novelty of a book? By no means: it is an age of books, and part of the action takes place in the chamber of scribes. What is novel is that one mighty form of literature, prophecy, is just passing from the spoken to the written stage. An age perfectly familiar with books of history, and books of law, had conceived of prophecy as inseparably connected with the presence of the prophet, an utterance as spontaneous as the delirium of a sick man; if the prophet becomes troublesome he can be "shut up." It now appears that prophetic utterance can take the form of a book: that the daily ministerings of a long course of years can be at once condensed and intensified into a piece of literature short enough to be read at a single sitting. We see a particular branch of literature in the act of transforming itself from spoken to written.

But the book is not the final term in the particular evolution we are tracing. Writing gives place to printing; printing expands indefinitely its powers of multiplication and distribution.

There arises at last a new kind of floating literature—Journalism: this word being used to express the whole of periodical literature, from the daily newspaper to the magazine and quarterly review. This is floating literature in the sense that it is periodical; as in the floating literature of oral poetry each repetition might be a new edition, so here each issue of a periodical nullifies preceding issues; when today's newspaper has come out, yesterday's paper ceases to be news. Confinement of literature to books had excluded the non-reading classes: with journalism reading is made universal. It is not only that the cheapness of the newspaper renders it universally accessible. Literature through this channel is forced upon the community as a whole: the advertisements are an adjunct to its commerce, the body of the paper is the organ of its public life. Authorship is affected. The collective authorship of oral poetry changed, with books, to individual authorship; the rise of journalism brings a change in a backward direction, and authorship becomes anonymous, with corresponding loss of responsibility. And what there is of copyright is the collective copyright of the journal. Once more: the advance of literary interest from conventionality to originality is carried a stage farther, and the dominant interest of the later floating literature becomes 'news.' It is now things 'ephemeral,' precisely because they are ephemeral, that make the characteristic matter of journalism.

We have now to apply this distinction of Floating and Fixed literature to what we saw as the six elements of literary form. This is suggested by Chart III on page 26. In reading this chart it will be natural to take the direction from left to right of the page as indicating progression in time. We thus have a literary progression from a floating literature which is oral, at the beginning, to a floating literature which is periodical, at the end. The middle part of the chart provides for the fixed literature of books: but neither in the chart nor in reality can

CHART III

Floating (Oral) Literature
BALLAD DANCE
Literary Protoplasm
Poetry: Creative Literature
EPIC
Creative
Description
LYRIC
Creative
Reflection
DRAMA
Creative
Presentation
Floating (Periodical) Literature
JOURNALISM
The Serial Story
Poets' Corner, etc.
Cartoons
Special Correspondence
Leading Articles
Letters to Editor
HISTORY
Description
PHILOSOPHY
Reflection
ORATORY
Presentation
Prose: Literature of Discussion

we draw any line of separation between the two, floating and fixed literature move on side by side. The first stage of literature is constituted wholly by the ballad dance: this protoplasmic form contains all other literary forms in embryo. The second stage of literature is reached as the ballad dance throws off the three forms of poetry: the creative description of Epic, the creative reflection of Lyric, the creative presentation of Drama. A further stage is seen when prose, the literature of discussion, has differentiated itself from creative poetry; its three forms—descriptive History, reflective Philosophy, Oratory with its function of presentation—counterparts to the three forms of poetry. The movement is now toward the floating literature of periodical writings. All the six forms of literature are attracted toward this periodical literature: each as it is absorbed into journalism undergoes a modification such as the floating character of the medium demands. Epic passes into journalism in the form of the serial story: any story of large dimensions can adapt itself to periodical literature only by reaching completeness in successive instalments. Lyric readily adapts itself to journalism: the oldest newspapers had their 'Poet's Corner'; modern newspapers have devised the most whimsical headings—'Alternating Currents,' 'A Line-o'-Type or Two,' and the like—under which the passing reflections of the day can attain creative form. History enters journalism with the special correspondent. Wherever important events are happening, or threatening to happen, newspaper enterprise sends special correspondents to the spot. Their function is the function of history: but, unlike the historian of prose literature, the special correspondent may not wait for events to attain completeness; what special correspondence gives us is history in the process of making. Philosophy appears in journalism in the form of editorials: the philosopher of prose may reflect on the sum of things, leading articles of periodical literature bring the philosophic outlook to bear upon

passing questions as they arise. Oratory passes into journalism as letters to the editor. The correspondent formally addresses the editor, as the orator formally addresses the chairman of the meeting: in both cases the real address is, not to chairman or editor, but to the whole meeting, or the hundreds of thousands who can be reached only by the editor's permission. In reference to the remaining one of the six forms, it might have been supposed, a priori, that it would be impossible for drama to become periodical. Quite in our own time this has been realized, in the cartoons that figure so prominently in present-day newspapers. Such cartoons, it is hardly necessary to explain, are entirely distinct from illustrations or pictures of scenes. A cartoon is a dramatic situation of public life presented to the eye; dialogue often accompanies it, but if not, it is, like the puppet-play, drama without words. The periodic character of the medium in which it appears makes a cartoon, not the complete drama, but the dramatic situation. The cartoons in *Punch* relating to Gladstone and to Disraeli, spread over a long course of years, have been collected and published separately: as we sweep through either collection we seem to catch the Gladstone drama, the Disraeli drama, of English history.

This transition from the floating literature of the ballad dance to the very different floating literature of journalism, with the intervening forms of fixed literature, seems to give us a progressive movement that has attained its completeness. What Chart III on page 26 reflects is, so to speak, a life history of literary form.

III

Out of the preceding discussion of the elements of literary form particular topics arise that are of general literary interest.

1. One of the starting-points for the more modern treatment of literature is that which has come to be known as the Homeric Question. Criticism arose for the Greeks, and was continued by their modern successors, in an age of books: it was not unnatural

that conditions belonging to written literature should, tacitly and half unconsciously, be assumed as applying to widely different ages. Thus the Homeric poems suggested a Homer who was an individual poet, and who 'wrote' the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, just as Euripides or Chaucer might write their poems. Later on, a study of the very different conditions attaching to early literature brought the suggestion that the Homeric poems were the result of an evolutionary process; that 'Homer' signified, not a poet, but a state of poetry. The suggestion was at first received with contemptuous incredulity; this was partly on account of its novelty, and in part because the new hypothesis was at first not very clearly conceived. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are, artistically, among the most perfect poems in existence: how, it was asked, could this artistic perfection be attained by the mere process of 'growing together'? The mystery disappears when the relative position of floating and fixed literature is clearly grasped. In a long tradition of rhapsodic recitations a vast mass of heroic ballads is accumulating and reaching perfection of detail; two particular series of these ballads cluster around the heroic personalities of Achilles and Odysseus; these two 'heroic cycles' are, of course, not poems, but aggregations of poems more or less articulated together.[1] These heroic cycles of oral poetry pass into the age of written literature and individual authorship. It now becomes possible for some individual poet—whose name may or may not have been Homer—to take the discordant mass of Achilles stories and harmonize them into the consistent plot of the *Iliad;* for the same or another poet to harmonize the Odysseus stories into the *Odyssey.*[2]

[1] These heroic cycles of floating poetry must not be confused with another use of the term: prose compilations of the Second Century B.C. Compare Gilbert Murray's *History of Ancient Greek Literature* (in Gosse's "Literatures of the World," published by Appleton), page 9.

[2] It must be understood that it is quite a separate question how far our texts of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* may have admitted changes of detail since

The full strength of both floating and fixed literature has been concentrated on the poems: from the long tradition of oral poetry has come the richness of detail; without the architectonic mind of an individual poet the harmony of consistent plot would be impossible. Moreover, what at first presented itself as exceptional and unique has, by further study of the world's literature, been seen to be a regular thing. Floating ballads are taken down from the lips of Gaelic reciters by Macpherson, and articulated into the poems of Ossian: Macpherson is the Homer of the Ossianic poetry, although (it must be confessed) a Homer whose work has been much less perfectly executed. The objections against Ossian that come from Dr. Samuel Johnson and his school show ignorance of the conditions of floating literature, inability to conceive any type of literature different from that of their own times. What Dr. Johnson stolidly rejected, the genius of Goethe and all Europe eagerly welcomed. Again, the Norse traditions that had grown into saga form pass through the architectonic mind of William Morris, and emerge as the great epic of *Sigurd the Volsung:* William Morris becomes the Homer that interprets Norse poetry to the mind of modern England. Instead of being conceived as a thing exceptional and strange, the "Homeric process" may be recognized as a regular phenomenon wherever floating literature and fixed literature come together.

2. The distinction between floating and fixed literature has a bearing upon questions of genuineness, authenticity, and

the main text was established. A convenient discussion of the whole subject will be found in Professor G. Murray's *History of Ancient Greek Literature* (Appleton), pages 1–53. Discussions of textual correctness are for experts in the subject. But a great factor in such discussions is the 'harmony' or 'inconsistencies' of the plot. I venture the remark that the purely literary question of what constitutes plot has had slight consideration in traditional study. According to conceptions of plot followed in this work (or in my *World Literature*, chapter ii) the plots of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are much more harmonious and perfect than they are usually supposed to be.

date. The Book of Job has profoundly impressed the whole literary world; and it seems natural to make the inquiry, What is the date of this wonderful book? It has often been claimed that the Book of Job is the oldest book in the world. Modern Hebrew scholarship inclines to the view that Job is a late book, of about the time of the Exile. Neither of these positions is correct; both have a measure of truth in them. Like so much of the world's greatest poetry, the Book of Job has passed over from the age of oral poetry to the age of written literature. Many of its details seem to reflect primitive life, such as would carry the first form of the poem to a past that is indefinitely far. Considerations of internal evidence favor the view that the poem attained the precise form it has in our Bibles only at a period as late as the Exile. But the true answer to the question is to recognize that the word 'date' has no meaning in application to floating poetry; or, if it has a meaning, the date becomes the relatively unimportant period when the oral development was fixed by writing. What applies to questions of date applies equally to questions of genuineness. Many critics of Job have maintained that the speeches of Elihu must come from a different source than that of the dialogue with the Friends, and are therefore not genuine. The fact of the argument may be correct, but the inference will not follow. The word 'genuineness' has no meaning except in connection with individual authorship; where a poem has drawn its richness from the inspiration of successive poets, the fact that part of it comes from one source and part from another makes neither part more or less 'genuine' than the other. More than one scholar has undertaken, by a process of critical analysis, to detect the successive accretions to this poem of Job, and to get back to what they call the original 'nucleus.' If we suppose that this critical analysis has been executed with absolute correctness—and this is supposing a great deal—still the alleged nucleus comes to us with no greater literary authority

than the later or final forms of the poem. Genuineness and date are considerations of authorship, not considerations of literature.

3. The literary processes we have been studying open up the question of Fossil Poetry. The reader is referred again to Chart III on page 26. When a particular mass of floating literature passes into an age of writing and books, what will become of it? There are three possibilities. Part of the oral literature, as we have seen, becomes worked over by individual poets, and is material of the poetry that is written and fixed. Part of it remains in the hands of minstrel reciters; gradually minstrel recitation is eliminated by the advance of book literature, and such portions of the oral poetry die out. But there is a third possibility. While particular poems are still in the stage of recitation, and so are free to change with each delivery, some particular delivery of the poem is taken down in writing and made permanent. This may be called fossil poetry. A notable illustration of it is the ballads of Bishop Percy's collection, which helped to bring about a revolution in the public taste for poetry. Objection has been taken to the description of these as fossil poems, on the ground that they are in fact not poems of any great antiquity, but have come from the débris of longer epics belonging to the preceding age. How far this is correct must be decided for each case on its merits. But this will not affect the question of fossil poetry. It is true that geology has led us to associate the word 'fossil' with a paleontological past: but remote antiquity is not essential to the idea of fossil. What exactly are the fossils of geology? In superficial appearance they are pieces of stone; but the geologist can show that, unlike stone in general, the fossils represent former organic life. Now, organic life is a thing of flux and constant change: while the creature lives, its life is a process of change from moment to moment, and when it dies the change continues

as decomposition. What has happened in a fossil is that one single moment in this ceaseless change has been touched by the petrifying processes of nature and been made perpetual. It is the same with such poems as the Percy ballads. In strictness, to speak of writing down a ballad is a contradiction in terms; for a ballad, as floating poetry, may vary with each repetition. What is meant is that *one particular repetition* of the changing ballad has been arrested by the fixing process of writing: in the strictest sense it has become a literary fossil.

4. Our consideration of successive stages in literary evolution has raised another topic of interest: the relation of journalism to the rest of literature. On this subject there are opposing opinions. Many will not admit the literary character of the newspaper, and insist on a sharp antithesis between journalism and literature. Others, more especially the present generation of readers, show by their practice that they look to the newspaper and the magazine as a foremost source of literary entertainment. They can support their view by pointing to the long list of writers of first order who are contributors to journalism, and the considerable number of literary masterpieces which have first appeared in periodical form. In this controverted question four remarks may be offered.

In the first place, we have seen that periodical literature comes as a natural stage in the evolution of literary form. Oral poetry, passing into books, gives floating literature a share in the development of the world's greatest literary achievements. The progression so commenced continues, and in a perfectly natural way leads on to a floating literature that is periodical; each of the main literary forms shows affinity for this periodical medium. If it be true that certain great literatures, such as that of ancient Greece, show nothing of this kind, it is because these literatures were prematurely arrested, and did not last long enough to attain their complete evolution.

More than this, journalism is the universalization of literature. The original oral poetry, we have seen, was addressed to the public as a whole; the passage from oral to written limits literature to a reading class, with a correspondent narrowing of interest, since literature must reflect the interest of the audience to which it appeals. With periodical literature the appeal and the breadth of interest are again made universal. And this universalization of literature by journalism is not potential, but actual; periodical literature is bound up with every detail of commercial activity and public life. Of course, the theory has been that, if the advent of books was a limitation of literary interest to a reading class, this was a temporary thing, to be overcome by education. But when we turn from theory to practice, we find that education has signally failed to bring about what is required; it has concerned itself with development of faculty only, not with stimulation of motive and interest. Public schools can easily make reading universal in the sense of giving the faculty to read: but have they given motives for reading or impulse toward literature? Where education has failed, journalism has succeeded: the newspaper has made literature a universal interest.

Over against this must be set a consideration of an opposite kind: if journalism increases enormously the number of readers, it is at the same time undermining the power to read. This particular effect may be described as the dissipation of the attention. Newspapers and magazines are not for reading in the sense in which we use that word of books. The use of newspapers and magazines develops a special mental habit: a power of sweeping swiftly over vast areas of print, with the attention held in leash ready to be slipped upon a few widely scattered things of interest. The mental habit once formed is turned upon other kinds of literature. But the reading of books requires sustained and concentrated attention. "Music as well consists in the ear as in the player": the great literary

classics depend almost as much upon what the reader brings as upon what the author has provided. The story-telling of antiquity is potent by what it leaves out. He who would tell a story to the most modern reader will need to see that every effect he desires is put in, unmistakably in, or it will be lost. I think those who have had experience in the literary training of the present generation will recognize this blunting of the instinct of appreciation where there is ample intelligence for appreciating what is pointed out. Thus there never was a time when the intensive study of literature was more needed than at the present. The reader who is anxious to be up to date is apt to find magazines and reviews more alive than formal literature. What is really happening is that, unconsciously, his magazine habit is filching from him his power of recognizing literary vitality when he sees it.

But the most serious characteristic of journalism is its effect upon authorship. With the passage from the book to periodical literature authorship tends to become anonymous, and with anonymity comes the almost total loss of responsibility. For a great part of a newspaper no individual can be made responsible; what some newspapers print no decent man would put his name to. Thus by the rise of journalism a place is found in literature for what is morally outrageous; more serious still is the removal of every barrier against looseness of statement and unverified information. Worst of all is the consideration that by periodical literature a pecuniary premium is put upon unreliability and insinuation; it is the sensational heading that sells the extra, the spicy rumor that gives the society journal its vogue. And this seems to be a public wrong without a remedy. It is a very small part of the evils of life that can be corrected by the machinery of justice. We need more spiritual and subtle restraints: among these one of the most potent is professional spirit. It is obvious that, for example, the practice of law and medicine offers scope for much that is evil; but here professional

feeling operates as a powerful force against malpractice. Is there anything corresponding to this in the profession of journalism? Allowance must be made for the newness of the institution. Otherwise, if journalists are to be seen uniting in co-operative efforts only for the promotion of newspaper enterprise, and not for effort toward restraint of abuses, journalism would seem to be a profession without a professional conscience.

5. Our discussion has touched the fringe of a large subject: what may be called the Evolution of Originality.[1] It can only be sketched here: fuller consideration would lead us beyond the scope of the present work to the study of literary origins—a thing best kept distinct from the study of literature. The leading points are indicated by Chart IV on page 37.

The literature we read today, and the traditional ideas we bring to bear upon it, are alike the product of the age of books and individual authorship. Thus the word 'original' seems to us to require no explanation: it is difficult to think away from it. In reality, what it indicates is a matter of slow growth, an evolution of which the three terms may be expressed by the words *communal*, *conventional*, *original*.

The starting-point is Communal or Folk Poetry. The ballad dance is performed by the whole community, by all who are present at the time; the performers and the audience are identical. The community is also the author, so far as the idea of authorship can apply in such a case; poetry is a popular game, and what variations arise are spontaneous from within, not imposed from without. Reflections of such a primitive stage of

[1] In this section of my work I wish to express my obligation to Professor Gummere's *Beginnings of Poetry* (Crowell), chapter iv. For the detailed evolution of literature in its early stages, the reader is referred to this work, or to such works as *The Evolution of Literature* by A. G. Mackenzie (Crowell), or Posnett's *Comparative Literature* (Kegan Paul). What we are here concerned with is the bearing of this early evolution upon the general theory of literature.

CHART IV

Evolution of Originality

Communal or Folk Poetry: Poetry as a popular Game

surviving in
- Popular Refrains
- Incrementals and Countings Out
- Songs of Labor
- [The Refrain adopted in fully developed poetry as a device for maintaining the prominence of the unity over the surface details]

Composition in the hands of a class: the Minstrels of Floating Poetry. Collective Authorship applied to Communal Material—thus dominant literary interest of **Conventionality**

Individual Authorship and dominant interest of **Originality.** Sentiment as Individualized Feeling

- Transition Stage: Drama: Individualizing of Character—Realism of Incident
- Climax: The Sonnet: The most individualized sentiment neutralized by restraint of form
- Reaction: Humor: The recoil from excessive sentiment

Permanent Influences on fully developed Poetry: The Antithesis of Conventional and Original—of Ideal and Real

poetry may be seen in the songs of labor, each kind of labor with its characteristic song; still more in the recurring refrains of the earlier ballads, it being understood that the refrain represents what originally was the whole performance. Advance is made from this by extemporized effusions of individuals, either interrupting the dance or running concurrently with it: these grow into what becomes the ballad apart from its refrain. The poetry of the Bible in parts carries us far back in this development of poetry. The frequent recurrence of the verse

> O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good:
> For his mercy endureth for ever:

points to this as originally a sacred folk song. In the hundred and thirty-sixth psalm one-half of that verse sung as a refrain—

> For his mercy endureth forever—

alternates throughout with single lines bringing matter for praise. It is significant that these lines of recitation can be grammatically continuous, independent of the parenthetic refrain.

> To him which led his people through the wilderness;
> (For his mercy endureth for ever)
> To him which smote great kings,
> (For his mercy endureth for ever)
> And slew famous kings,
> (For his mercy endureth for ever)
> Sihon king of the Amorites,
> (For his mercy endureth for ever)
> And Og king of Bashan;
> (For his mercy endureth for ever)
> And gave their land for an heritage,
> (For his mercy endureth for ever)
> Even an heritage unto Israel his servant:
> (For his mercy endureth for ever).

This seems to carry us back to the point where the accretional matter can be concurrent with the dance. And the whole process seems to be reflected in the fifteenth chapter of Exodus. Verses 20–21 of that chapter, as remarked before, seem to give us the original ballad dance, with its reiteration of the verse—

> Sing ye unto the LORD, for he hath triumphed gloriously;
> The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea.

Or, if we interpret the phrase, "And Miriam answered them," to mean that she as leader uttered the first line of the couplet while the dancers would respond with the second line, then we have the first form of accretional interruption. This would grow as more and more of matter for praise comes to be interjected between reiterations of the refrain. The first eighteen verses of the chapter are made by a majestic hymn, in its matter obviously late, inserted by the historian, and representing in the fulness of poetry the product of these gradual accretions.

It is to be noted that the recurring refrain has been adopted by fully developed lyric poetry, as a device for maintaining the prominence of the unity over the surface details. It acts like the instrumental accompaniment which is heard suggestively through the stanzas of a song, and fills up the intervals between them.

> Marching along, fifty-score strong,
> Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

This refrain makes the whole burden of Browning's "Cavalier Song," to which the successive stanzas—with their girdings at Hampden and Pym, and longing for the fray at Nottingham—are only accessory.

The middle stage of the process is represented by what we have already seen as the floating poetry of the minstrels. The audience and the performers are now distinct: poetic composition is in the hands of a class. Yet the community as a whole has not entirely abdicated from its poetic function: what the

minstrels invent must be adapted to the expectant attitude of the community. This is the literary interest of conventionality, with its recurring thoughts and expressions, and craving after reiteration of the familiar.

When poetry is fixed by writing, connection becomes possible between particular poems and particular poets. Individual authorship has come in, and the idea of individual property in poetic thought, which is simply another name for originality. Perhaps the word which most deeply reflects this new trend in the evolution of poetry is the word 'sentiment.' Earlier poetry ministered to the sympathies of the community: sentiment is individualized feeling. The set of poetic progress is in the direction of sentiment, though various phases of the movement may be distinguished. We can see how the drama makes a transition stage. The essential function of drama is to present an objective story: the story is all in all in the puppet-play, where the personages are dolls; it is a step from this to the masks worn by actors in Greek drama, which were a limitation on variations of character. Ultimately all such limitations are transcended; freedom of dialogue leads steadily toward complete individualization of character, and toward the realism which is individualization of incident. The climax of the movement toward individualization of thought is seen in the sonnet; this has been humorously called an "apartment for a single gentleman in verse." The familiar lines of Wordsworth are in point:

> Happy the feeling from the bosom thrown
> In perfect shape . . . . best likened to a stone
> Of the sea-beach, when, polished with nice care,
> Veins it discovers exquisite and rare,
> Which for the loss of that moist gleam atone
> That tempted first to gather it.

The sonnet becomes an accepted medium for the most particularized bosom-thinking of the individual, largely because

its severe restraint of form acts as a corrective. Finally, with all this set of the poetic current in the direction of sentiment, there is a reaction that appears in humor: humor is the recoil from excess of sentiment. It is seen in things great and small. The sway toward sentiment in Euripides at once calls up an Aristophanes; the almost mawkish sentimentality of Richardson is answered by the open-air freshnesss of Fielding's parodies. The author of the *Seasons* wrote a rather sentimental tragedy, *Sophonisba*, which contained one unfortunate line:

O Sophonisba! Sophonisba O!

Coffee-house wit caught the false note and reiterated—

O Jemmy Thomson! Jemmy Thomson O!!!

In this particular function of humor we see the starting-point and the end of the evolution brought together: humor is the last pull of the 'common sense' against the individual thinking that is getting out of range.

The gradual evolution of originality has left permanent influences behind it. Fully developed poetry retains this antithesis of conventional and original. Here we have the tides of the literary ocean: the conventional poetry of Pope and its poetic diction lead inevitably to the reaction under Wordsworth, with its fresh and individual study of nature and insistence upon spontaneous style; so when the "demonic" poetry of Byron has spent its first impulse, it becomes an easily imitated and wearying convention, that is preparing acceptance for the subtle individualized thinking of Browning. And this antithesis of original and conventional has at least some measure of relation with a more fundamental conception in poetry—the antithesis of ideal and real. Ideal seems to suggest the rare atmosphere in which only the most individualized flight can sustain itself; realism brings us down to the objective, and therefore the common world.

CHAPTER II

THE FUSION OF LITERARY ELEMENTS

I

In the preceding chapter we considered the six elements of literary form: how, in the ballad dance, as literary protoplasm, the elements are held together in embryo; how, rising out of this ballad dance, poetry crystallizes into the distinct forms of epic narrative, dramatic presentation, and lyric meditation; how by a later stage of evolution prose, with its limitation to discussion of what actually exists, gradually differentiates itself from the poetry that admits creation; how, in time, the three elements of prose—history, philosophy, oratory—stand as counterparts to the three elements of poetry. In the present chapter we are to trace how, side by side with this differentiation of literary elements, a counter movement is to be recognized, by which the elements tend to re-enter into union with one another. They can combine, in the sense that two or more elements can coexist in the same literary work. They can enter into the still closer union of fusion, by which one element can admit the function of another. Something of a parallel to all this is exhibited in the study of language. The 'parts of speech' recognized by grammatical analysis make a counterpart to the elements of literary form. When a language has largely lost inflections, there is nothing to prevent particular words serving now for one and now for another part of speech on different occasions. This belongs to ordinary usage; but in vigorous and highly idiomatic speech there is the further possibility that different parts of speech may combine their functions in the same word. 'Proud' comes to us with all the

associations of an adjective; yet in the irate language of old Capulet it gets the vigorous life of both a noun and a verb:

> Proud me no prouds,
> But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next,
> To go with Paris to St. Peter's Church.

In the sentence, "He *theed* and *thoued* me like a Quaker," pronouns can be elevated to verbs without ceasing to be pronouns. Purely relational parts of speech, like conjunctions and prepositions, seem far removed from the highly presentive verb and noun; yet in vigorous dialogue the fusion can be effected: "But me no buts"—"Unstable of character amid exciting events he kept *toing* and *froing* like a caged tiger." Take the sentence: "I picked up a gold pin on the Carnegie Library Reception Hall anteroom window sill edge." Here eight unmistakable nouns stand in succession; by a grammatical effect akin to apposition seven of the eight are made to serve as adjectives; substitute for these seven actual adjectives, and the color of the sentence is changed. Yet the essential differences of the parts of speech are not in any way impaired by their power of idiomatic fusion.

Let us first note how the different elements of literary form, in their essential character, seem adapted for fusion. In our Table of Elements (Chart I, page 18) epic and drama appear on opposite sides of the table as antithetic to one another. Both imply a story. In epic, the story is narrated: the possibility of narration implies that the events are in the past, and the narrator is interposed between the incidents and the audience. In drama, the incidents are moving forward in the present, and the audience is in immediate contact with these incidents without any intervening narrator. To make pure epic the narration must be the absolute narration of the poet. A step toward fusion of epic and drama is taken when the narrator

is one of the personages of the story. Here there is immediate contact with the content of the story, though it is contact at only one point, that of the particular person of the story who narrates; and the fact of narration implies that the events are in the past. More complete fusion is obtained where a novel, as in the novels of Richardson, is conveyed wholly in exchange of letters between the characters portrayed. Such exchange of letters is an extension of dialogue: there is no speaker but the personages of the story, and the movement is movement in the present. Yet the epic function is implicitly retained; as is well illustrated in such a case as the *Redgauntlet* of Sir Walter Scott, in which, after the first half of the action has been conveyed wholly in letters, the author's narration appears, and assists in conveying the later part of the movement.

Lyric has a close affinity for both epic and drama: its position in the chart presents it—so to speak—as sitting on the fence between the two, so that at any moment, without ceasing to be lyric, it can dip on one side and become narrative, and dip on the other side into the monologue of dramatic presentation.[1] A ballad like *Chevy Chase* is epic narration of a story; yet it is unmistakably lyric, and in many such ballads the refrain appears and emphasizes the tone of lyric celebration. The choral odes of Greek tragedy are highly lyrical; yet many of these odes are narrative odes[2]—of legends called up by the progress of the dramatic movement. The eighteenth psalm is a magnificent lyric. Its opening is rapturous celebration of the delivering God; at verse 4 it settles down into a long drawn epic narration of a past deliverance—how the speaker was in dire extremity, how he made his appeal, how all nature was convulsed as the God of nature descended to the rescue of the sufferer. Then the tone of lyric celebration is recovered, with

[1] Compare below, pages 197 ff.

[2] Compare my *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 80–81.

emphasis on the triumph of the cause of righteousness, and faith for the future; the whole ends with a return to the first tone of rapturous celebration. The affinity of lyric for drama is well illustrated in the psalms of the Bible. The first psalm is pure lyric: the poet is meditating on the course of the righteous and the wicked. But numerous psalms are monodies: here the speaker is the personage imagined to be undergoing the experience which is being celebrated: this is one element of presentation. How much farther the approach to drama can go is seen in such a psalm as the fifty-seventh.

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me;
For my soul taketh refuge in thee:
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
Until these calamities be overpast.

I will cry unto God Most High,
Unto God who performeth all things for me;
He shall send from heaven, and save me, when he that would
swallow me up reproacheth;
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.

My soul is among lions;
I lie among them that are set on fire,
Even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let thy glory be above all the earth.

They have prepared a net for my steps;
My soul is bowed down:
They have digged a pit before me—
They are fallen into the midst thereof themselves!

My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:
I will sing, yea, I will sing praises.
Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:
I myself will awake right early.

I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples:
I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.
For thy mercy is great unto the heavens,
And thy truth unto the skies.

Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens;
Let thy glory be above all the earth.

Here, in lyric song emphasized by a refrain, an imagined personage is undergoing a present experience of affliction, detailed in all its circumstances. When the climax has been reached—

They have digged a pit before me—

the line that follows—

They are fallen into the midst thereof themselves!

brings out how the external situation has suddenly changed: circumstances of depression have been transformed into circumstances of triumph, and all that follows is exultation. All the conditions that make presentation are fulfilled: the psalm is a miniature drama, type of the many dramatic monologues of the Bible.[1]

As lyric has a central position among the forms of poetry, so its counterpart philosophy has the same central position among the forms of prose. Philosophy is essentially reflection, but it can advance in the direction of description: the descriptive sciences are included in philosophy, although they can exist apart from it. Similarly, philosophy can move in the direction of presentation and become exposition. The exposition of some scientific theme would vary greatly according as it might be addressed to a class of Freshmen or a learned society of experts: this determining influence of the audience upon the exposition is the essential point of oratory as a form of prose. And it is obvious that history, in the same way, can adapt its exposition to a particular audience, and so fuse with oratory.

[1] Compare my *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 185–96; or, *Modern Reader's Bible*, notes to Ps. 3 and Pss. 9–10.

I proceed to the question of fusion between the elements of poetry and the elements of prose. Lyric and philosophy appear at opposite extremities of our table of forms. Yet they can overlap: philosophy is meditation limited to meditation on things as they actually exist; lyric is not so limited, but can take in creation. This is not a mere academic distinction. A famous ode of Wordsworth suggests certain characteristics of the child mind as associated with half-memories of a previous existence. Suppose the objection to be made that such association is not founded on fact, that the characteristics of the child mind so indicated can be sufficiently explained by psychology as due to other causes. Such an objection (if sound) might militate against our consideration of the ode as pure philosophy: it would not affect it as lyric poetry, since the association once indicated might retain its full validity as a fancy, with its appeal to the sense of the beautiful.

Drama and oratory have entered into complete fusion in the great Book of Deuteronomy.[1] This presents itself as the farewell of Moses to Israel: in the main it is a series of orations, while the fifteen chapters containing the Book of the Covenant make a document read as appendix to one of the orations. The whole supposes an underlying dramatic situation, which has fascinated the minds of literary readers—the situation of Moses as the one man who realizes the Promised Land, and yet the one man of all present on the occasion who is never to enter it. In this situation we follow, first, an oration in which Moses announces the secret of his own deposition; then, the oration on the delivery of the Book of the Covenant to the Levites and Elders who are to succeed him. A third oration connects itself with a rehearsal of the dread ceremonial of the Blessing and the Curse, and is the masterpiece of all literature for the rhetoric of denunciation. A fourth oration culminates in

[1] Compare in *Modern Reader's Bible*, Introduction to Deuteronomy and text as there arranged (or chapter xii in my *Literary Study of the Bible*).

the retirement of Moses and the installation of Joshua. With a change natural in Hebrew literature, oratory gives place to song. The finale presents the passing away of the hero, scattering blessings as he goes, and rising to his old physical vigor as his parting words glorify the mission of Israel for all time. The briefest narrative—like an extended stage direction—tells of the retirement into solitude and death. A great dramatic movement binds all parts of the book into a unity, while oratorical monologue has taken the place of dramatic dialogue.

More complex questions arise as to the fusion of epic and history. There is the same overlapping that we noted in the case of lyric and philosophy: history, in fully developed prose, limits itself by existing facts, epic extends to take in the creative. A work like Carlyle's *French Revolution* is surely a work of history: yet it includes conceptions of personality and realizations of incident as truly creative as those of epic poetry. The question of the fusion is more fully raised if we compare the Shakespearean drama of *Henry the Eighth* with the treatment of the same topic by modern historians. In the age of Shakespeare the differentiation of history from story had not yet taken place. Verification of historic material, which is the starting-point of history in fully developed prose, did not exist for the Elizabethan age; to say nothing of the vast body of historic evidence that has come to light only in our own time. Hence the Shakespearean conception of Henry is pure poetry. In modern times the problem of this historic personality must be investigated in the spirit of pure prose. But what are we to say as to an historian like Froude? It is freely objected against such historical writers as Froude and Carlyle that they have not limited their conceptions to what can be covered by verified facts. Assume the objection to be well founded; yet this does not necessarily exclude their results from the domain of history. In thus allowing imagination to color their concep-

tions they are offering what may be called *creative hypotheses*, which will stand or fall as they are confronted with the ever-growing body of evidence. Such creative hypotheses make an important point in the fusion of epic and history.

Possibly an objection may here be raised, especially by those who are versed in traditional literary theories, that this free interchangeability of literary elements destroys the value of the original definitions. Such an objection rests upon confusion between the static and the evolutionary attitude of mind. We must be on our guard against mistaking between static *distinctions* and evolutionary *differentiations:* between differences that formulate themselves in limiting definitions, and differentiations which are a process of becoming gradually more and more separate. The whole course of literature is an evolution: the elements of literary form rise out of the embryonic ballad dance, in which they are all united; they draw apart with differences of function; they draw together again as the functions can coalesce. The failure to recognize literature as a thing of evolution was the fundamental error of the literary theory that dates from the Renaissance, when Greek literature, so admirably formulated by Aristotle, was understood to be a limiting model for all time; if Homer was epic poetry, then nothing could be epic poetry that did not constitute itself according to Homer. Hence arose the *fallacy of kinds*,[1] which Mr. Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* shows to have so often worked havoc in literary history: the idea that there existed some abstract forms or kinds of literature which, by some mysterious external force, limited creation to conformity with them. Reliance upon theory of this order was a contest against nature, and broke down at every crisis in literary history. It was a confusion between the two meanings of the word 'law': laws in the scientific sense, the formulation of particular practice, and laws in the other sense, by which a sovereign authority binds

[1] Compare below, page 306, note 3.

those who recognize it.[1] It is literature in its natural evolution that, from time to time, determines particular kinds of literary composition, not the kinds that determine the literature.

Are there then, it will be asked, no particular kinds, or types, of literature, no literary *genres*, to use a word much in vogue at the present time? The classification of literary *genres* is possible and valuable: but such classes or types are not to be confused with the elements of literary form. There is such a thing as satire. But satire is not a literary element: it is a literary motive, working through drama in Ben Jonson, through epistolary address in Horace, through epic in *Hudibras*. We may recognize didactic poetry and pastoral poetry, the idyl and the essay. Classifications of this sort are made from particular points of view; they are often of temporary, partial, relative significance. The discussion of such classifications belongs to the literary history of particular peoples, or particular epochs. The elements of literary form are of universal significance. And in the classification of literary *genres* no small factor will be found in their relation to the fundamental elements of form, and the fusion of these elements in new combinations.

II

I proceed to consider notable illustrations of poetry resting upon the combination and fusion of literary forms.

The most obvious example is Greek tragedy. This is distinguished from other dramatic types as choral tragedy: the name implies union of drama and lyric, dramatic scenes by actors on a stage alternating with lyric odes performed by a Chorus in the orchestra. A later chapter[2] will review in detail the evolution of this interesting form of literature. At the beginning of the process we have the Chorus as a body of singers

[1] Compare below, page 299.

[2] Chapter viii, pages 163–75. The subject is discussed at length in my *Ancient Classical Drama*, chapters ii–iii.

and dancers who perform a bállad dance before an audience; when the evolution is complete the Chorus has become a dramatization of the audience itself, which—through the Chorus as its representatives—is given a place in the performance, and made poetically to express the alternations of feeling called forth by the movement of events. The odes which the Chorus sing by themselves they sing in dramatic characterization fitted to the story; and this dramatic characterization extends to the episodes, in which the Chorus, as by-standers in the scenes, may approach to the verge of becoming actors, yet always stop short. The dramatic episodes feel the attraction of the lyric element: at any suitable point dramatic dialogue rises to lyric monologue or dialogue, performed with musical accessories. The whole is thus an interchange of opera and drama, and the change from one to the other has always dramatic significance.[1] Nor is this all. At one point Greek tragedy is seen to have absorbed an element of epic: this is the 'Messenger's Speech,' conveying to us some incident of the plot in a mode that is dramatic at the start, but changes as the speech proceeds to the long drawn particularity of epic narration. And the later tragedies show how the element of oratory has also been absorbed. The strange proclivity of the Athenians for their law courts has found a place in impassioned dramas for 'rheses,' elaborate disquisitions on moral topics; and for the 'forsensic contest,' in which, for a single scene, the two sides of the story are balanced as evenly as the pleas of a plaintiff and defendant. Four out of the six elements of literary form have been brought together to constitute Greek tragedy.

From the other of our two ancestral literatures comes another example of literary fusion. This is the prophetic rhapsody[2]

[1] This important point is discussed fully below, chapter xxvi, pages 479–86.

[2] For the prophetic rhapsody compare Introduction to Isaiah in *Modern Reader's Bible* (or, *Literary Study of the Bible,* chapters xviii–xx).

of Biblical literature. Here the different literary elements have blended as prismatic colors merge in white light. The general impression of a prophetic rhapsody is unquestionably the presentation of a dramatic movement: yet it is a dramatic movement such as no stage could compass, for it is the movement of divine Providence—in Biblical phrase, divine judgment—in the theater of a whole universe, unbounded by time or place. All literary forms can, in this spiritual atmosphere, co-operate to bring home this dramatic movement to our minds. We have dialogue: not the formal dialogue that could be fitted to a list of *dramatis personae*, but mystic dialogue. We hear the voice of Deity; the voice of Prophecy; the voices of Israel, of the divers Nations; voices of the Saved and the Doomed; voices from the ends of the earth; cries of mystic Watchmen, cries from the North, from the hills of Ephraim or Dan; impersonal cries; songs also, impersonal like the chorales of our oratorios. Even Silence can seem to be a speaker in this rhapsodic dialogue, as appeal after appeal remains unanswered until the sudden awakening takes place. Involved with this mystic dialogue is not less mystic scenery—the scenery of the spiritual world: sudden changes of scene brought out by exclamations of the prophetic spectator; bursts of vision lyrically realized; waves of successive visions alternating with the interpreting voices of Deity or the prophet. Or, the pall of universal destruction will suddenly rend to let the Mountain of Salvation stand clear; rocking earthquake and darkness will give place to the Holy Mountain flowing with milk and honey. In presentation so purely spiritual, it becomes possible at times for simple narration to convey a single stage of the action, before dialogue and vision resume. And all these vivid modes of presentation can rise out of the even tenor of discourse, and sink into discourse again, as clearly as if a curtain had been suddenly lifted, and as suddenly dropped. The prophetic rhapsody is the supreme contribution of Hebraic literature to poetic form. Un-

fortunately, the formless printing of our Bibles—as later on we shall have to note—hides this vivid presentation from the ordinary reader, who must receive the rhapsodies of prophecy in a succession of numbered verses, broken by chapter divisions without literary significance.

In modern literature the works of Robert Browning make an excellent field for the study of literary morphology. Browning's handling of his themes, and sometimes the very titles of the poems, seem directly to challenge conceptions of poetic form; and, in particular, they illustrate the interchangeability and fusion of literary elements. Many of his songs, of course, are pure lyrics. *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day* are lyrics that can take in epic vision. Again, poems like *Strafford*, or *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, are full stage dramas. In other cases we have epic narration by the poet: notably in *Sordello*, the opening and closing lines emphasize that we have "Sordello's story told." More frequently in Browning the whole drift of a poem seems to rest upon the clash of literary elements.

Epic narration and dramatic presentation are antithetic to one another: in an important group of Browning's poems the two contraries are brought together. *The Inn Album* may be considered a superb drama of situation. To a large extent the mutual relations of the personages have been determined by the situation with which the poem opens: the action develops this situation to the most tragic of climaxes. Yet there is an element in this poem that is other than dramatic. We may say, in general terms, that the written text of any drama may involve a modicum of epic description: this is the stage directions. In such plays as Shakespeare's these are too brief to be noticed; other dramatists, like Victor Hugo and Ibsen, make their stage directions elaborately descriptive. But it is only in the text that this descriptive element appears: when the play is acted, it merges in the presentation of the whole. Where a

drama is dissociated from the stage, there is room for the expansion of this epic description. Thus, in the Book of Job, the narration of the prologue is carried forward into the dramatic body of the poem in phrases like these: "Then Job opened his mouth and cursed his day"; or, "Then answered Eliphaz the Temanite and said." And a description several lines in length introduces Elihu. Formal as this may seem, it has had important consequences, and the whole Book of Job has frequently been designated as an epic. In *The Inn Album*, the main part of the poem consists of highly dramatic dialogue—indicated in the text by quotation marks—which takes place in specific scenes, such as the Inn, the Railway Station. But where the quotation marks cease, the poet's narration will appear:

> So they ring bell, give orders, pay, depart
> Amid profuse acknowledgments from host
> Who well knows what may bring the younger back.

Morphologically considered, the whole poem is a drama with its stage directions epically expanded.

Two other poems depend to a notable degree upon bringing together narration and presentation. *Balaustion's Adventure* contains the whole *Alcestis* of Euripides, not however presented, but conveyed in narrative form by Balaustion. This narration takes place in a highly dramatic situation: the audience to which Balaustion is speaking has just rescued her from captivity in their enthusiasm for this very Euripides. The whole becomes drama absorbed into dramatic epic. In *Aristophanes' Apology*, we have an elaborate incident—the clash between Balaustion and Aristophanes—in narrative form. But the narration is dramatic narration: it comes from one of the personages of the incident, Balaustion, and in surroundings presented as the natural sequel to that which is the point of the debate: for Balaustion is sailing into exile from an Athens

ruined by the same spirit which has led Aristophanes and Athens to reject Euripides. To make the mixture of elements the greater, the poem includes another drama of Euripides, in this case not converted into narrative, but given in its full presentative form.

Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau is, in superficial appearance, epic narrative: a narrated autobiography of the Prince as "Saviour of Society." Upon closer inspection it is seen to be, not narration at all, but autobiographical 'reverie': not the story of a life that is closed, but suggestion how this life, when it shall have been completed, may be interpreted from its own point of view. Such reverie is clearly presentation. This reverie, moreover, goes on in an imagined dramatic situation: the Prince is fancying himself at the end of his days an exile in London, expounding to a fair female admirer, who pours out tea for him, and is asleep before the exposition is half done. This imagined situation reveals itself only gradually as the poem proceeds; similarly, its interpretation of the life is put forward tentatively, in successive phases, any phase as soon as it is stated being subject to doubts how far it represents the truth.

> Here lie the dozen volumes of my life.
> (Did I say "lie"? the pregnant word will serve.)

Only at the very end does the situation stand fully revealed, and it appears that all this reverie has been started by the necessity of sending a reply to a letter from a hard-headed Cousin-Duke. Which reply, as the reverie concludes, shall now go.—"Or, stay?"—The tone of presentation is retained to the last.

A *tour-de-force* of combination between the drama and epic is afforded by Browning's most elaborate poem, *The Ring and the Book*. It must be remembered that in this we have two different poetic movements, which in analysis must be kept distinct. One is the story of low life and high life entangled

together, which culminates in the triple murder. The other movement is made by the review of this story, when in succession it is subjected to comment by the different tribunals of Rome and by the tribunal of public opinion. The first of these movements—the story of Count Guido and Pompilia and Caponsacchi—is epically treated. But it is not the regular epic in which an author narrates a story once for all. If such an expression might be permitted, it is an epic with a kaleidoscopic plot: the story is told over and over again by different speakers from different points of view; the same constituent elements enter into the story in each case, in each case—after the fashion of a kaleidoscope—they resolve themselves into a different plot or interpretative design. But these successive narrations are making a new movement, as they follow one another in dramatic progression. We have the first flush of rumor, bandying the facts from side to side—from the side of One Half-Rome, of the Other Half-Rome, or the superfine "Tertium Quid." We have next the case of each person involved in the tragedy, standing in turn before the judges. Then we have the materials so collected as they are digested by counsel for either side. We have the final review by the Pope, who appears as a lonely personality isolated from the world for which he is spiritually responsible. We then see the changed aspect of the whole story in the mind of the hero-villain after he knows his fate. Finally, we watch the story die away through vague rumor into oblivion. If the type of the whole poem must be formulated, it appears as a kaleidoscopic epic absorbed into a drama with a rising and falling action.

Fifine at the Fair is a curiosity of literary form. Morphology, like misfortune, can make strange bed-fellows: this quaint poem may, structurally, be exactly paralleled with the Book of Job. In each, the dramatic body of the poem is framed in a non-dramatic prologue and epilogue. The Hebrew masterpiece is a solemn discussion of a sublime mystery—the interpretation

of divine Providence in its dealings with the righteous and the wicked. The discussion is also a dramatic movement, through conflicts of passionate remonstrance to a climax when the divine Voice is heard amid the convulsion of all nature. But this dramatic part of Job stands between a prologue and epilogue in epic narrative; these are on a different plane from the rest of the work, and offer an explanation in the mysteries of heaven for the problem found insoluble on earth. The body of Browning's poem is a whimsical discussion of levity and constancy in love. It is made dramatic in Browning's favorite mode—of monologue that becomes dialogue by taking up and interpreting the silent gestures of an auditor, who in this case is the pure wife. This dramatic movement is just reaching a climax of the hero declaring finally for constancy, when the pressure of a *billet-doux* in the hand he is holding behind him sends him back for another plunge in dissipation. But all this is to be read in the light of the prologue and epilogue to the poem—in this case a lyric prologue and epilogue. The prologue is a lovely bit of symbolism: the butterfly is a creature of heaven descending so far toward earth as to be floating in air; the man has so far transcended his earth as to be swimming in ocean; there is a hovering attraction binding the two together, but they belong to different spheres, and can never be wholly united. In the epilogue, we have the glorified wife descending from her heaven to comfort the inconstant husband in his lonely house amid the weariness of a disenchanted life.

Savage I was sitting in my house, late, lone:
Dreary, weary with the long day's work:
Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone:
Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk;
When, in a moment, just a knock, call, cry,
Half a pang and all a rapture, there again were we!—
"What, and it is really you again?" quoth I:
"I again, what else did you expect?" quoth She.

Rough ballad meter and jingling rhythm are bringing down the spiritual tone of such a visitation more nearly to a level with the rest of the poem.

"Ah, if you but knew how time has dragged, days, nights!
All the neighbour-talk with man and maid—such men!
All the fuss and trouble of street-sounds, window-sights:
All the worry of flapping door and echoing roof; and then,
All the fancies . . . . Who were they had leave, dared try
Darker arts that almost struck despair in me?
If you knew but how I dwelt down here!" quoth I:
"And was I so better off up there?" quoth She.

Whimsical to the last, the husband insists upon the conventional epitaph before he can quit the empty life and join his ghost love.

"Help and get it over! *Reunited to his wife*
(How draw up the paper lets the parish-people know?)
Lies M., or N., departed from this life,
Day the this or that, month and year the so and so.
What i' the way of final flourish? Prose, verse? Try!
Affliction sore long time he bore, or, what is it to be?
Till God did please to grant him ease. Do end!" quoth I:
"I end with—Love is all and Death is nought!" quoth She.

When we come to the shorter poems of Browning, it is noticeable that a considerable number of these appear under the headings, "Dramatic Lyrics," "Dramatic Romances." If this were the arrangement of an editor, we should be justified in inquiring how far the classification was correct; coming from the poet himself the titles must be considered as part of the creation, and must enter into the interpretation of the poems. In the volume of "Dramatic Lyrics" Browning has given us an explanatory note:

'Such poems as the majority in this volume might also come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of "Dramatic Pieces";

being, though often Lyric in expression, always Dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine.

The full meaning of the word 'dramatic' as a term of morphology would involve more than this: they must be utterances, not merely of imaginary persons, but of persons belonging to the story implied in the poem. With Browning's modified use of the word it becomes easy to see the dramatic character of the lyrics, and recognize a speaker other than the poet. Occasionally this consideration becomes a factor in the interpretation. Commentators on *The Lost Leader* are fond of insisting upon a veiled reference to the well-known change of front on the part of the poet Wordsworth. If we were dealing with a pure lyric, the suggestion would become absurd: a man of the caliber of Browning could not say as to a man of the caliber of Wordsworth—

> Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a riband to stick in his coat.

But this is precisely what the rank and file of a party are likely to say of great men. What this lyric presents is, not a fallen poet, but a disappointed party. So the little gem, *My Star*, implies as speaker one who sees in his love what other persons fail to see. *Any Wife to Any Husband* must be spoken by a wife about to survive her husband. The great lyric poem, *Women and Roses*, is not a general lyric celebration of its theme: it presents the dramatic situation of a lover distracted equally between the three essential types of womanhood, and losing all through being unable to make choice.

In the title "Dramatic Romances," Browning clearly uses the word 'Romance' as simply meaning 'Narrative': none of the other significations of this many-sided word will fit the case. Thus the title implies the union of drama with epic. In this sense the designation is easily understood: in almost all cases

we find some pronoun, or other detail, making clear that the narration is coming from a personage of the story that is being told, if it be but a bystander.

"You know, *we* French stormed Ratisbon."

"This story of both do *our* townsmen tell."

In *Count Gismond*, the story is told by the heroine, and told in a dramatic situation constituted by her care to prevent the modest husband from hearing her passionate admiration of his heroism. The narrator in *The Glove* is a poetic spectator of the incident, who has been in a position to see two sides of a dramatic situation where the public has seen only one. *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* might seem like the absolute narration of the pure epic, until the nonsense rhymes of the final stanza remind us of the child audience, presentation to which makes the poem dramatic. In *Holy-Cross Day*, the narration is that of the introductory note (itself, of course, part of the creation): what follows is from the speakers in the situation so introduced. An extreme case is *The Heretic's Tragedy*. Here we have not an iota of narration: all is lyric triumph in a dramatic situation. Yet the art of the poem is such that the story of the faithful martyr seems to tell itself, as if per contra from the self-righteous gloatings of the persecutors who cannot fathom his faith.

From the morphological point of view two of these dramatic romances involve problems of interpretation. *The Boy and the Angel* is from beginning to end absolute narration; there is no possibility of connecting this narration with any speaker other than the poet. The romance is made 'dramatic' by what is one of the secondary, not the primary, features of drama. It is natural for what is dramatic to fall into 'acts.' The acts of a drama are altogether different from the successive books or cantos of an epic. The fall and rise of the curtain imply a break in the action; and presentation is greatly assisted when

the movement is not continuous, but appears in a succession of separated phases. To illustrate from a bit of modern folk-lore:

Boy
Gun
Joy
Fun

Gun
Bust
Boy
Dust

This is a tragedy in two acts; tell the thing continuously, and the humor is gone. Now, Browning's poem—though there is nothing in the text to indicate it—really presents itself as a drama in five acts.

I. The boy in the simple service of his trade. (Five couplets.)
II. The mistaken monk disturbs the serenity of this simple service by introducing the idea of the grand service of the Pope. (Five couplets.)
III. Theocritus in the service of the church—Gabriel supplying his place at the lowly trade. (Nine couplets.)
IV. Gabriel has discovered his mistake: he meets the newly made Pope Theocritus and dismisses him to his old service, taking his place as Pope. (Eighteen couplets.)
V. Theocritus at his trade: Gabriel as Pope: both pass away at the same moment. (Two couplets.)

What we have here is, not the narrated story of a whole career, but the narrative presentation of five luminous points in that career, the five points standing out all the clearer because what comes between is a blank.

The other is the extraordinary poem entitled *Mesmerism*. This is dramatic enough, with the hero as speaker: but where

is the story narration that will justify the title of romance? Accepted interpretations of this poem get over the difficulty by understanding the hero to be narrating how, with his mesmeric power, he had drawn his love helpless into his presence, and then refrained from taking further advantage of this situation. To me this seems an impossible interpretation: what is implied is, that the girl does not come, because the mesmeric force is not exercised on her. The opening stanza strikes the keynote of a power the speaker *believes* himself to possess:

> All I believed is true!
> I am able yet
> All I want to get
> By a method as strange as new:
> Dare I trust the same to you?

And as this thought is expanded at length, in the middle comes the parenthetic line—

> Then I reach, I must believe—

to remind us that all this is the possible, not the actual, exercise of mesmeric force. The crux of the interpretation is the grammatical structure of the poem. A hypothetical sentence consists naturally of two parts: the protasis, or *If*-clause, and the apodosis, or *Then*-clause. In the present case we have a protasis extended over twenty-four stanzas, or one hundred and twenty lines: where the apodosis would naturally begin, the structure is broken off, and there is substituted a prayer for restraint. All the twenty-four stanzas rest upon the reiterated *If:* it is the long-drawn mental realization, in all its detail, of a mesmeric attraction only imagined, until this has reached—always in imagination—complete success. Then the speaker breaks off to pray against the temptation ever to use so dangerous a power. The narration implied in the title is *hypothetical* narration, in the historic present of realization.

A whole commentary might be written on Browning's works from the morphological point of view. The genius of Browning is pre-eminently dramatic. Yet only a small part of his poetic output consists of stage dramas; and these, placed beside the greatest dramas of the stage, are perhaps not conspicuously successful. The significance of this is, not deficiency in the poetry, but elasticity of the dramatic medium. Shakespeare and Ibsen have revealed how great stage dramas can be. To Browning it has been given to show how greatly the drama transcends the stage: how, retaining its full dramatic force, it can yet enter into fusion with all the other elements of literary form.

CHAPTER III

LITERARY FORM THE KEY TO LITERARY INTERPRETATION

The preceding chapters have been occupied with technicalities of literary form. All the world is interested in literature; but the number is not small of those who take the position that what interests them is the matter and spirit of literature, while questions of literary form they would leave to dilettantes and experts. It thus becomes desirable to lay down as a fundamental principle in the study of literature that form is the key to interpretation.

A clear grasp of the external form is essential for entering into the matter and spirit of all literature.

The technicalities of epic, lyric, drama, and other literary forms, have the same bearing upon literary appreciation that the technicalities of grammar have upon the understanding of language. Of the two things literary form is the more important: a grammatical misconception would probably affect only a detail, whereas a misconception of its literary form might lead us astray as to a whole poem.

It is clear that if a man was engaged in reading a drama, and —*per impossibile*—he supposed himself to be reading an essay, he would be plunged in confusion. If he were reading a satire, and had taken it for a serious argument, he would go grievously astray: this is said to have happened when Defoe wrote his *Shortest Way with Dissenters*, and was thanked by church dignitaries for his valuable contribution to ecclesiastical controversy. We have seen in the preceding chapter[1] how readers of Browning, making the technical confusion between pure lyric and

[1] Above, page 59.

dramatic lyric, have insisted upon understanding as sentiments of Browning what, by the poet's own definition, must be sentiments of "some imaginary person, not myself." But these may seem to be trifling or far-fetched instances of what is put forward as a universal principle. If the law of form as the key to interpretation does not immediately commend itself to the reader's mind, this is because, in modern books, care is taken to present to the eye literature in a form that is unmistakable, so that the principle operates upon the reader unconsciously, like the law of gravitation. We may recur to the analogy of grammar. Most of us, though we may be impeccable in our grammar, would nevertheless be greatly embarrassed if what we read were presented to us without any marks of punctuation, or wrongly punctuated. Punctuation is a device for making grammatical structure unmistakable to the eye: in the same way the technique of the printed page makes literary form and structure automatically self-evident. Let helps of this kind be withheld, and the reader would soon realize how close is the connection between form and interpretation.

Now, there is an important region of literature in which this structural presentation of what is read is traditionally lacking. This is the literature we call the Bible. I am here entering upon a subject of the highest importance to literary study, yet one which until recent years seems to have been almost totally neglected. I refer to the morphological confusion in which Biblical literature has become involved during its transmission through the Middle Ages. The Bible, like any other great literature, is made up of epic poems, lyrics, dramas, and almost all varieties of literary form. Yet in the Bibles commonly accepted among us nothing of this kind appears: what these present to the eye is a uniformity of numbered chapters and verses, under which all distinction of literary form has disappeared. The cause of this extraordinary phenomenon is connected with the nature of ancient manuscripts. Until about

the first or second century of the Christian era manuscripts were entirely destitute of literary form: a page of an ancient manuscript shows alphabetical letters covering the whole, without divisions into words, still less divisions into sentences with punctuation; there is no discrimination of verse and prose, still less discrimination between different kinds of verse; dramatic passages have no names of speakers or division of speeches. In manuscripts of this kind all forms of literature—dramatic dialogue or straightforward narration—will look exactly alike. This much applies to all literature:[1] the distinction of the Bible from the rest lies in this special fact. The other poetry of antiquity was in the hands of literary men, who—in spite of the manuscripts—were keenly sensitive to poetic form: when the advance in the art of writing made it possible they gave to such poetry its appropriate outer form. But between ourselves and the authors of Old Testament literature there is interposed a long era of commentators: those in charge of the Bible preserved its words faithfully, but had no interest in its form. On the contrary, they looked upon the sacred Scripture as materials for commenting, and were ready to make long comments upon every clause. When the advance in the art of writing reached them, it was natural that the form they gave to this Bible was that of texts numbered for comment, and as numbered texts and chapters it has come down to us. From the literary point of view this means a double perversion of the original: the true forms have disappeared, and another form—of chapters and verses—has been imposed upon biblical literature for which there is no warrant.

Let us take a passage of the Bible (Isa. 40:3–8) which in its full literary setting would appear as follows. Proclamation

[1] Early manuscripts of Euripides have recently been discovered which show separation of verse lines, though without separation of words, or names of speakers. Copyists were paid by the verse.

has been heard from God of comfort for Jerusalem, and voices are carrying on the word of comfort across the desert to the holy land.

A Voice of One Crying

Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the LORD,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
Every valley shall be exalted,
And every mountain and hill shall be made low:
And the crooked shall be made straight,
And the rough places plain:
And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
And all flesh shall see it together:
For the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

A Second Voice (in the distance)

Cry!

A Despairing Voice

What shall I cry?
All flesh is grass,
And all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field:
The grass withereth,
The flower fadeth,
Because the breath of the LORD bloweth upon it:
Surely the people is grass!

The Second Voice

The grass withereth,
The flower fadeth:
But the word of our God shall stand for ever.

Now, in an ancient manuscript (the language being changed to English) such a passage would present an appearance like this.

THEVOICEOFHIMTHATCRIETHINTHEWILDE
RNESSPREPAREYETHEWAYOFTHELORDMAK
ESTRAIGHTINTHEDESERTAHIGHWAYFOROU
RGODEVERYVALLEYSHALLBEEXALTEDAND

The mediaeval commentators, and our translators who followed them, broke up the general mass of this into lengths—or 'texts' —arranged for convenience of commentary; accordingly the form this passage assumes in ordinary Bibles will be this:

l Matt. 3 : 3 Mark 1 : 3 Luke 3 : 4 John 1 : 23
m Mal. 3 : 1
n Ps. 68 : 4
p Ch. 45 : 2
9 Or. *a straight place*
c Job 14 : 2 1 Pet. 1 : 24
4 Or *a plain place*
e John 12 : 34

3. [l]The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, [m]Prepare ye the way of the LORD, [n]make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
4. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: [p]and the crooked shall be made [9]straight, and the rough places[4] plain:
5. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see *it* together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.
6. The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? [c]All flesh *is* grass, and all the goodliness thereof *is* as the flower of the field:
7. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people *is* grass.
8. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: [e]but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

The recovery from this mediaeval transformation of Biblical literature has been a slow process. The elementary distinction between prose and verse in Hebrew was not discovered until more than a century after King James's Bible was issued. In the Revised Version of our own time the step has been taken of separating what is obviously prose and what is obviously verse. But it has been left to the present generation to take up the problem of fully restoring to Holy Scripture its literary form. Thus the *Modern Reader's Bible*,[1] accepting for translation the Revised Version, has made the attempt—from internal evidence and considerations of comparative literature—to ascertain the correct literary form of every part of the Bible, and to present

[1] Published by Macmillan: see list of my works at the end of this volume.

this to the eye with the same technical correctness of printing that, as a matter of course, is accorded to all other literature without exception. It is structural presentation of this kind which brings home to the reader how deeply literary form is bound up with literary interpretation.

To take the most obvious of illustrations. A simple Christian sits down to read a chapter of the Bible as a devotional exercise. Accustomed to read by chapters, he has not noticed that what he has before him on this occasion is part of a speech of Eliphaz, or Bildad, or Zophar—the three Friends of Job, who, in the last chapter of the book, are rebuked by God for not having said of him the thing that is right. The reader has thus been seeking to bring home as divine message to his soul the words of a speaker whom God has expressly repudiated. The devotional exercise has gone wrong—devotionally wrong—for want of attention to a point of literary form: the dramatic character of the Book of Job, and the clear principle that the words of a drama do not give the meaning of the book, or of the author, but simply sentiments suitable to the particular speaker represented as speaking them.

In antithesis to this let us take the case of a learned man—whose scholarship is historical but not literary—dealing with such a portion of Scripture as the Book of Micah. Reading in what appears as the last two chapters of the book, he comes suddenly upon a startling change of spirit: up to a particular point all has been trouble and confusion, from that point there is elation and confidence. Intent only upon historical considerations, he pronounces that this latter part must be an *interpolation* from literature of a subsequent age; that—in the phrase of Wellhausen—between verses 6 and 7 [of chapter 7] "there yawns a century." Attention to literary form would have made clear that what yawns between the verses is simply a change of speakers in a dialogue. It is no question of conjecture: this portion of Micah is introduced with a title-verse

(6:9) announcing a dialogue in which "the voice of the LORD crieth to the city" and "the Man of Wisdom" will hear. What follows conforms to this: divine denunciation of the city, the city's panic-stricken lament, and—at the point in question—the speech of the Man of Wisdom, whose exulting cry is a recognition that God is on his side. Thus, the historian can go wrong in his history, as the devotional reader went wrong in his devotion, by the same error of ignoring the dramatic form of what is being read.

The form which is the key to interpretation is not confined to broad differences, like that between drama and other literary types, but extends to the most minute points of poetic structure. Let the reader refer again to the passage cited on page 67. What he sees is a struggle between contrasting voices: one, a voice of glad tidings; the other, a despairing voice that resists the message. Now, in a well-known musical setting of this passage,[1] the author sees correctly that there are two voices, but divides the speeches wrongly. Thus the bass is made to say 'Cry,' to which the soprano answers 'What shall I cry?' The bass says, 'All flesh is grass,' and the soprano obediently repeats, 'All flesh is grass'; the bass continues, 'And all the goodliness thereof as the flower of grass,' and the soprano repeats the words. Instead of opposing voices, the one voice is made to echo the other: that is to say, the drift of the whole passage is exactly reversed, through a minute error of structural division.

The principle applies similarly to the finer shades of meaning, which count for so much in literary beauty. The Lord's Prayer is traditionally printed, and therefore declaimed, as a series of separate petitions:

> Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

[1] By G. M. Garrett, "The Voice of One Crying" (Novello).

This portion of the Prayer, in reality, is what is technically called the Envelope Figure: the first line is echoed in the last, and what comes between is to be read in the light of both:

Our Father which art in heaven:
Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy Will be done,
In earth as it is in heaven.

In the common rendering, the words "in earth as it is in heaven" attach themselves only to the petition, "Thy will be done." What the true form suggests is: Hallowed be thy Name in earth as it is in heaven; Thy Kingdom come in earth as it is in heaven; Thy Will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Few readers will think this a trifling difference.

Or, let the question be one of authorship. It is well known that there is controversy over the authorship of the Book of Ecclesiastes. Tradition has ascribed this book to King Solomon: and this becomes more than a mere question of authorship, for the unwholesome personality of Solomon has colored the whole spirit of the book for most readers. Historical scholarship can give good reasons for assigning to Ecclesiastes a date later by many centuries than the time of Solomon: but this is resisted on the plausible ground that the book itself claims Solomon as its author.

I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem.

A critical deadlock seems thus to arise: internal evidence pointing one way, and the claim of the book itself pointing in a different direction. What the principle under discussion suggests is that the first step is to fix exactly the literary form of Ecclesiastes. In the *Modern Reader's Bible* the book is presented as a series of five essays, the intervals between the essays (as is common in wisdom literature) filled up with miscellaneous

maxims and other sayings, the whole being bound into a unity by a prologue and epilogue. Assuming this to be the correct form of Ecclesiastes, let us put the question, Does this book claim, or does it not, the authorship of the historical Solomon? We turn first to the prologue and epilogue, as the natural places in which to obtain light on the question of authorship: we find not a word suggesting Solomon or any other individual as author. Next, we take the miscellaneous sayings: again there is not a word as to Solomon, but on the contrary, the sayings suggest one who looks upon life from below, rather than a king who looks down on life from above. We turn to the five essays: in four out of the five there is no suggestion of Solomon or any other author. All association with the historical Solomon is confined to the first essay. This first essay, upon examination, is seen to stand apart from the rest of the book: it is all in the first person, and describes an experiment—an imaginary experiment—by which the different types of lives that men lead are tested, one after another, to see if any one will yield 'wisdom.' This experiment is naturally put into the mouth of the one personage of history who was most fitted to undertake it. The subject of this imaginary experiment once finished, the first person is dropped, and there is no more of Solomon in the book. When the book is read in its correct literary form, what appears is, not that Solomon is made the author of the book, but that he is made the hero of one part of it. There is nothing to set against the internal evidence that points to a late date, and the whole controversy falls to the ground.[1]

Let one more illustration be permitted. In the case of the poem entitled The Song of Songs, the technical literary form is a matter of dispute. What is certain is that we have dialogue, with a story underlying the dialogue. The majority of commentators take the idea of drama as the most obvious literary

[1] A fuller discussion of the question will be found in the Introduction to Ecclesiastes in the *Modern Reader's Bible*.

form combining dialogue with story. But there is another literary type which conforms to these requirements; in the *Modern Reader's Bible* the poem is presented as a series of lyric idyls. There is no need to discuss at length the technical differences between these two forms of literature:[1] how in a drama the movement can never go back, whereas in a lyric setting the different parts of the action can appear in any order; how a drama must present every word as spoken by a particular personage in a particular scene, whereas lyric poetry provides for passages which are impersonal. It is enough to note that those who have pronounced the poem a drama are in substantial agreement as to the story this drama presents: the story of contest between King Solomon and a humble Shepherd for the love of a fair Shulammite maiden, with the issue that the King at last gives way, and the Shepherd and the Shulammite are united. On the other hand, if the poem be assumed to be lyric, and read on this basis, then it appears that King Solomon is himself the Shepherd wooer. The story now becomes this: that Solomon and his court, visiting the royal vineyards on Mount Lebanon, come by surprise on the fair Shulammite, who flees in affright. Solomon, smitten by the sight of her, wooes her in disguise as one of her own rank, and wins her heart; then he appears in his royal state and claims her as his queen; the two are being wedded in the royal palace as the poem opens. The point is not, which of these two interpretations is correct. What bears upon the present argument is that the whole story of the poem comes out quite differently, as the poem is read in the form of a drama or the form of a lyric idyl. It would be difficult to find a more conclusive test of the principle that external literary form is the key to interpretation of the matter and spirit of literature.

[1] A full discussion in the Introduction to the Song of Songs in the *Modern Reader's Bible*. (In the small-volume edition of the *Modern Reader's Bible* the Song of Songs is contained in the volume entitled "Biblical Idyls.")

The subject of this First Book has been Literary Morphology: varieties of literary form and their underlying principles. These varieties of form, we have just seen, are a leading factor in interpretation. The traditional treatment of the subject has often conceived these literary forms to be static: as if the dead hand of a classical past had fixed once for all certain types, to which subsequent writers must conform. This is the Fallacy of Kinds, which again and again has emerged in the history of criticism, and has again and again been overthrown. Form in literature is a thing of evolution: as literature progresses new forms unfold, and older forms modify themselves. The six elements of form—epic, lyric, drama, history, philosophy, oratory—are not so many classes of literature, mutually exclusive, to which particular works are to be referred; like the elements of chemistry they can combine in particular works, and the fusion of these elements becomes a source of literary effect. The attitude of a reader to what he reads is that of an interpreter. He must first, in the light of the literature before him and of literature in general, seek to interpret the underlying form. He will then find that the form helps to interpret the meaning.

BOOK II

THE FIELD AND SCOPE OF LITERARY STUDY

CHAPTER IV: The Unity of the Literary Field and the Conception of World Literature

CHAPTER V: The Outer and the Inner Study of Literature

CHAPTER IV

THE UNITY OF THE LITERARY FIELD AND THE CONCEPTION OF WORLD LITERATURE

The subject of this work is, not precisely Literature, but the Study of Literature. We cannot proceed beyond the elements of literary form without being confronted with important considerations as to the field and scope of literary study.

I

The existing tradition of the study—as Chart V on page 78 suggests—follows the departmental form taken by the Humanity studies in our universities and schools, and in the private reading which is affected by this. What we find is that one set of students, in one department, is occupied with oriental literatures, in connection with oriental languages, oriental history, oriental philosophy, and oriental art. Another set of students, in another department, is occupied with Greek literature, in connection with Greek language and history and philosophy and art. Similarly, in separate departments, Latin, Romance, Germanic, English literatures are taken, always in association with the respective languages, histories, philosophies, arts. Now, whatever may be the advantages of this arrangement on other grounds, such a state of things cannot possibly be called a study of literature. It is a study of nationalities: each separate nationality being observed from the points of view of language, literature, history, philosophy, and art. And yet, except so far as literature is concerned, the study of the Humanities has long since emancipated itself from departmental narrowing. If we treat Chart V as if it were a sum in algebra, we may add up the first column, and see how the separate languages have grown together into the great study of

philology. Similarly, the separate histories have coalesced, the separate philosophies and arts, into independent studies of history, philosophy, art. It is strange that there should be so

CHART V

Departmental Tradition of Literary Study

Oriental	Languages	+	Literatures	+	History	+	Philosophy	+	Art	+	etc.
Greek	Language	+	Literature	+	History	+	Philosophy	+	Art	+	etc.
Latin	Language	+	Literature	+	History	+	Philosophy	+	Art	+	etc.
Romance	Languages	+	Literatures	+	History	+	Philosophy	+	Art	+	etc.
Germanic	Languages	+	Literatures	+	History	+	Philosophy	+	Art	+	etc.
English	Language	+	Literature	+	History	+	Philosophy	+	Art	+	etc.
etc.	etc.		etc.		etc.		etc.		etc.		etc.
	Philology		**Literature**		**History**		**Philosophy**		**Art**		

long a delay before we can see the particular literatures transcending departmental limitations and rising into a study of literature.

At this point care must be taken to avoid a misunderstanding into which it is easy to fall.

Distinguish { Aggregation of literatures—Universal Literature
Unity of Literature—World Literature.

It is not a mere aggregation of separate literatures, but the unity of literature, that is the essential point. To have read separately works of philosophy in Greek, German, English, and other languages, would not be sufficient to make philosophy. Histories of various countries, if taken separately without their mutual connection, would make a poor study of history. Nay—were such a thing within the bounds of human faculties—a man

might have acquired all the languages spoken on earth and yet not be a philologist. We must distinguish between universal literature, a mere name for the totality of all existing literatures, and what may be called world literature. This is universal literature seen in perspective from a given point of view—presumably, the point of view of the reader's national civilization. I have, in a separate work, presented in full detail the conception of world literature as the true field for literary study: I may be permitted to quote from this work[1] its definition of the term.

Universal Literature can only mean the sum total of all literatures. World Literature, as I use the term, is this Universal Literature seen in perspective from a given point of view, presumably the national standpoint of the observer. The difference of the two may be illustrated by the different ways in which the science of Geography and the art of Landscape might deal with the same physical particulars. We have to do with a mountain ten thousand feet high, a tree-fringed pond not a quarter of an acre in extent, a sloping meadow rising perhaps to a hundred feet, a lake some four hundred miles in length. So far as Geography would take cognizance of these physical features, they must be taken all in their exact dimensions. But Landscape would begin by fixing a point of view: from that point the elements of the landscape would be seen to modify their relative proportions. The distant mountain would diminish to a point of snow; the pond would become the prominent center, every tree distinct; the meadow would have some softening of remoteness; on the other side the huge lake would appear a silver streak upon the horizon. By a similar kind of perspective, World Literature will be a different thing to the Englishman and the Japanese: the Shakespeare who bulks so large to the Englishman will be a small detail to the Japanese, while the Chinese literature which makes the foreground in the one literary landscape may be hardly descernible in the other. World Literature will be a different thing even to the Englishman and the Frenchman; only in this case the similar history of the two peoples will make the

[1] *World Literature* (Macmillan). The passage quoted is on page 6.

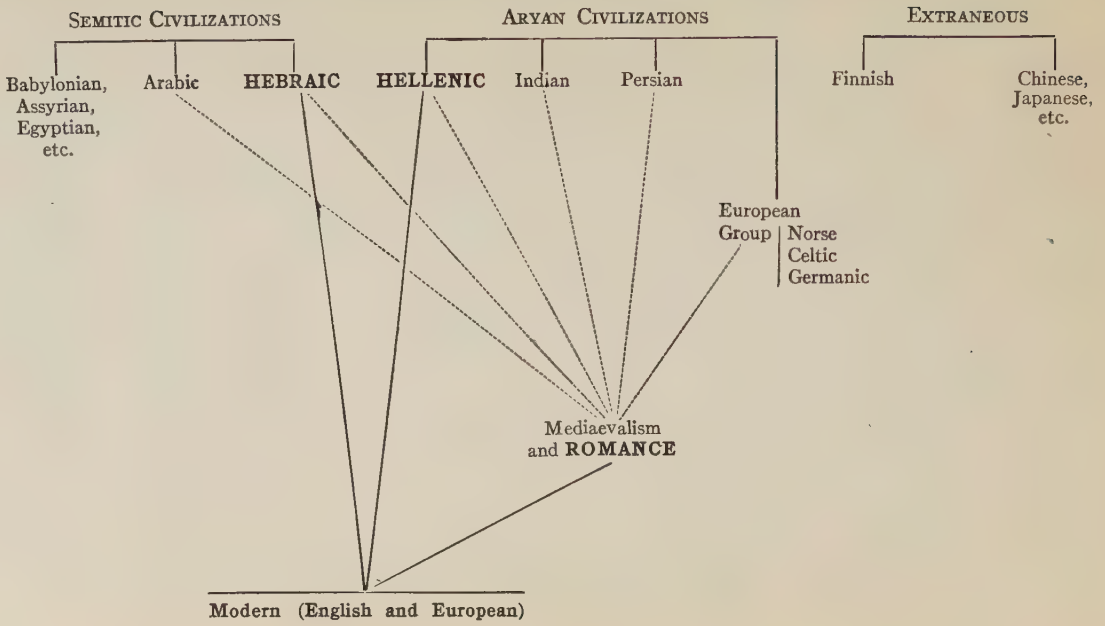
constituent elements of the two landscapes much the same, and the difference will be mainly in the distribution of the parts. More than this, World Literature may be different for different individuals of the same nation: obviously, one man will have a wider outlook, taking in more of universal literature; or it may be that the individuality of the student, or of some teacher who has influenced him, has served as a lens focussing the multiplex particulars of the whole in its own individual arrangement. In each case the World Literature is a real unity; and it is a unity which is the reflection of the unity of all literature.

I am persuaded that the conception of world literature in this sense is essential for realizing the unity of literature in practical study. It both satisfies the desiderata of literary culture, and it presents literature in adequate volume for the study of its underlying principles. The present work, naturally, is written from the viewpoint of the English-speaking civilization. But the results would be the same in substance, with variations only of detail, if the point of view were French, or German, or other European civilization.

The first step, upon which all the rest depends, is to seize with accuracy our point of view: that is, to understand the civilization of which we are a part in its relation with the other civilizations of the world, and with the literatures in which these civilizations are reflected. On page 81 I take from the work of mine already mentioned its Table of the Literary Pedigree of the English-speaking Civilization (Chart VI). In interpreting this chart the central point is that our English civilization —as also that of the great European nations—is the product of two factors, the union of which has made us what we are. These are represented by the names Hellenic and Hebraic: Hellenic, the civilization of the Hellenic peoples, reflected in Greek and Latin literature; Hebraic, that part of Hebrew civilization which stands reflected in the literature we call the Bible. Our science, philosophy, political systems, are made

CHART VI

Literary Pedigree of the English-speaking Civilization



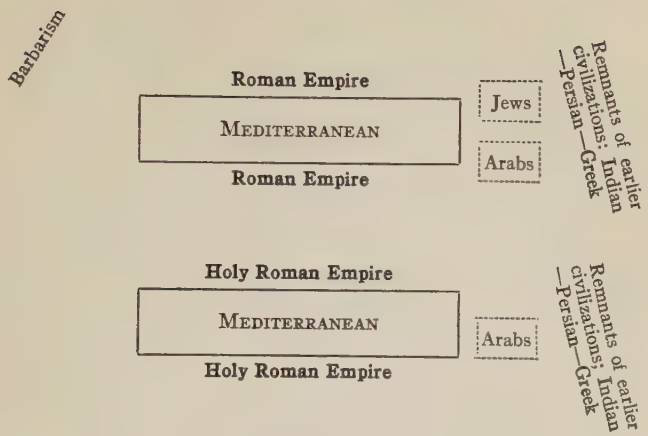
by the continuation of processes commenced for us by the ancient Greeks. But when we come to our spiritual nature, in this we have nothing in common with the Greeks: this spiritual nature is the outcome of Hebraic ideas represented in literature by the Bible. The Hellenic and the Hebraic are our parent civilizations: Classical and Biblical literature must combine to make the foundation of our literary study.

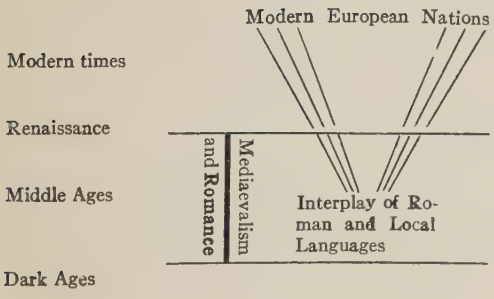
The union of Hellenic and Hebraic civilizations was not a single event, but a long process; or rather, there were three distinct fusions of Hellenic with Hebraic culture. The first took place when, three centuries before Christ, the conquests of Alexander the Great forced Hellenic culture upon the whole civilized world, and so upon the unwilling Jews; in spite of obstinate resistance, Palestine was permeated with Greek culture, and the new city of Alexandria became a center of Jewish life hardly second to Palestine. Here we have Hellenism invading Hebraism: there ensues a type of culture such as made St. Paul a mediator between Christianity and the gentile world. The second fusion of the two came about when the Roman Empire, the final form of Hellenic civilization, was Christianized: here Hebraism invades Hellenism. But it is an historic fact—upon which I will presently enlarge—that in this case it was a very attenuated Hellenism and a very attenuated Hebraism that thus intermingled, leading to the immature culture and confused social changes of the Dark and Middle Ages. At last we have the Renaissance, in which complete Hellenism and complete Hebraism are fused together; this Renaissance is the starting-point of modern life.

It is the second of these three revolutions, and the Mediaevalism it introduces, that immediately concerns us. It becomes desirable to recall the historic framework of the Middle Ages; and on page 83 I have, in very rough diagram (Chart VII),

CHART VII

Stages of Mediaeval History





endeavored to indicate the leading stages of mediaeval history.[1]

Our starting-point is the Mediterranean Sea, indicated by its name as the center of the then civilized world. Round its shores is the highly organized Roman Empire. On the north and west of this lies the dark region of barbarism, from which will come the vital forces of the future. On the east we have remnants of earlier civilizations—Indian, Persian, Greek. Two items must be added, of importance for their future: these are—if the expression may be permitted—the highly *explosive* civilizations of the Jews and the Arabs; insignificant in appearance, but capable of sudden change into forces of world-wide domination.

The first advance is seen when Judaism, most exclusive of civilizations, develops Christianity, that claims the whole world for its sphere. The Roman Empire receives these Christianizing influences at just the period when it is gradually absorbing into itself the barbarian nations. Centuries ensue of life-and-death conflict between the Roman Empire and the barbarian peoples: this is "the Dark Ages," in which the Hellenic culture inherited by the Roman Empire becomes dissipated. But the very Hebraism that Christianity was introducing into Roman society was itself attenuated. It is true that the Dark Ages constituted the period when, as regards ecclesiastical and theological system, Christianity was dominant. But the literary basis of Christianity, the Bible, was at this time thrown into the background: even at the end of the Middle Ages we find a Martin Luther discovering by accident that the Bible is a whole literature in itself, and not merely the select passages

[1] It is hardly within the function of this work to indicate books on mediaeval history. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Lord Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire* are the most important. A sketch somewhat fuller than that in the text will be found in my *World Literature* (Macmillan), pages 27–53.

with which he had been familiar in the services of the church; and Carlstadt tells us how he was professor of theology in his university before ever he had read the Bible.

The total result of this first epoch is that the Roman Empire has changed into the Holy Roman Empire. We must exclude from our minds the modern idea of Europe as a mixture of nations. Mediaeval Europe was a unity. Politically, its organization was that of the feudal system: almost every castle is the center of some local government; these feudal units are forever shifting, and all enter into a chain of subordinate and superior authority, the whole culminating in the emperor, who represents the majesty of imperial Rome. At the same time Europe is a spiritual unit: the Pope of Rome is the brain; the clergy, as a ramifying nerve system, connects the papal authority with every corner of Europe. The consciousness of the time[1] recognizes this union of state and church: they are the body and soul of Europe, and neither can exist without the other.

The second revolution comes when Arabic civilization becomes explosive, and is suddenly transformed into the world-conquering religion of Mahomet. This spreads like wildfire through the whole of the East, and through the Roman Empire south of the Mediterranean. The earlier civilizations—Indian, Persian, and even Greek—are swept into the advancing current of Mohammedanism. Thus at last we see, on opposite sides of the Mediterranean, Christendom and Islam confronting one another. Each is of the nature of a world-empire; each presents the combination of church and state. There is a further parallel which it is important to notice. Throughout Christendom, Latin or Roman language is the official language of religion and of the clerical or educated class. In different localities this Roman language is being corrupted by local speech. Here we have the foundation of the languages, and so of the separate

[1] As represented in Dante's *De Monarchiâ*.

nationalities, which make up the Europe of the future. Where in this language-formation the Roman element is stronger than the local elements, we get what are still called the Romance languages of French, Italian, Spanish. In other cases, such as English or German, the local language proves more powerful than the Roman: these stand distinct from the so-called Romance languages, yet they share the common process of interaction between Roman and native speech. Language plays an important, but a different, part in the Mohammedan world. Arabic is the official and religious language of Islam, as Latin was of Christendom: but the important point in this case is that constituent civilizations—Indian, Greek—must translate their literature into Arabic in order to give it new currency. Arabic literature has thus in the Middle Ages the carrying trade in ideas; but it is only the vehicle of communication, and apart from poetry Arabic civilization has added nothing of its own to the common stock.

It is an inevitable further stage that between this Christendom and this Islam there should be clash and intermingling. Mohammedanism invades Europe: but the great Battle of Tours (A.D. 732) gives it its final defeat. Centuries later, in the movements known as Crusades, Europe as one man advances to the conquest of the Mohammedan world, but utterly fails to effect it. Meanwhile, Arabic culture interpenetrates Christendom: Europe of the Middle Ages has for one of its distinguishing features Arabic medicine, Arabic philosophy, Arabic science. But these are Arabic only in appearance: they give us Greek science, medicine, philosophy, in Arabic translations or commentaries.

The Middle Ages make an important epoch in the history of the world. But in dealing with this it is important to distinguish between what belongs to the period itself and what has significance in its bearing upon the future. Mediaevalism was

itself a rich and varied culture,[1] with its magnificent Gothic art, its ecclesiastical hymnology and literature, its scholastic philosophy, its epic of mediaeval legend, its religious drama. In the Middle Ages, again, are to be traced the roots of the independent literatures of the modern European nations. But what is most important for our present purpose is the creative poetry of mediaevalism which in universal literature stands under the designation of Romance, and makes one of the dominant factors in our literary pedigree. As the dotted lines in Chart VI on page 81 suggest, Europe of the Middle Ages is the meeting-ground for coalescence between streams of imaginative poetry coming from the most varied sources. There is the intermingling of folk-lores of the European races—Norse, Celtic, Germanic; Hellenic imagination has been inherited from the past; with the influence of the Church come Hebraic story and ecclesiastical legends; the presence of the Arabs makes a link with oriental poetry of Arabia, India, and Persia. All these freely combine: and the combination is accentuated by two forces, one positive and one negative. On the one hand mediaeval life—with its chivalry, its magic, its interest in travel and wonderland—is a perpetual stimulus to poetic creation. The negative force is the total quiescence in mediaevalism of critical restraint. A notable feature of ancient Greek literature is the fact that the splendor of its first outburst—in Homer and tragedy—generated an attitude of conservative criticism in the public mind, which resented any departure from the earliest forms, and even additions to the traditional matter of poetry. More and more Greek and Roman poetry became a reiteration of the same forms, an echoing of traditional story, until at last it degenerated into mechanical and sterile imitation. In contrast with this, mediaevalism presents a free field for all in poetry that is fresh, original, surprising, exuberant,

[1] Compare my *World Literature* (Macmillan), pages 35–53.

and even wild. The aggregation of this 'Romantic' poetry makes a body of literature of sufficient volume and weight to hold its own even against the splendid Classical poetry that was presently to be recovered.

We now reach the Renaissance, the revolution which is the transition from mediaeval to modern. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in A.D. 1453 is one of several forces which brought the manuscripts of Greek literature, with Greek scholars who could interpret them, to Western Europe. Hellenic literature and art in its completeness is now the possession of Europe: and this makes the first phase of the Renaissance. But among these manuscripts are the manuscripts of the Bible, both Hebrew and Greek: Hebraic culture in its fulness has reached the European world, and the Renaissance develops into the Reformation. The modern world appears in a new thought, new religion, new art, and new poetry. The new thought means the resumption of Greek philosophy and science interrupted by the Dark Ages; but it is a resumption with the important additions of two novelties—scientific experiment and the diffusive power of printing. To the Catholic religion of the past are added Protestant and rationalizing systems: but the newness of the new religion is found in the fact that all systems—alike religions of authority and religions of free thought—depend upon voluntary acceptance by the individual mind, and cannot be enforced by the magistrate. There is a new art, in the addition of Gothic art to Classic art, and in the rise of modern music. What is most important for our purpose is the new poetry, that rests upon the harmony of Classic and Romantic. Classic poetry emphasizes accepted forms, and echoes of the poetry that has preceded: this is, so to speak, the centripetal force of imagination. Romantic is the centrifugal force of novelty, surprise, and freedom. The balance of Classic and Romantic makes the sanity of modern poetry.

II

We are now in a position to realize in its full significance the conception of world literature. It is not to be supposed that such world literature can be comprehended in the hundred or more "best books." Each student must make his own selection: it is the province of literary study to give him the philosophy of literature that will be behind the "best books." The pedigree of our civilization furnishes, as it were, a map of all literature to aid the process of selecting. We recognize certain literature as ancestral: Classical and Biblical literatures have the first claim on us. As regards the third of the dominant factors in our pedigree, Romance, we must distinguish: the important point here is not the actual literature of the Middle Ages—which, with the single exception of Dante, is not of supreme excellence—but the Romantic ideal which mediaevalism has enthroned side by side with the ideal of the Classical. A second division of literature appears to hold to us a less close affinity: Indian, Persian, Norse, Celtic, the branches of Semitic and Aryan other than Hellenic and Hebraic, all this stands to us as collateral world literature. Other literature is to be deemed extraneous. Yet here, as always, intrinsic literary importance can countervail questions of affinity. No poetry can be more remote from us than the poetry of Finland: yet such a poem as the *Kalevala*, by its intrinsic charm, and by the way it has preserved stages of imaginative evolution otherwise lost, can be brought from the outer extremity of our literary field into the heart of our world literature. When we come to modern poetry, the important point to recognize is that the whole of Europe, with the European element in all parts of the world, constitutes a single reading circle. The various nations have gradually differentiated from the unity of mediaeval Europe in which they grew together: yet in our broad outlook we see here a single literature. Usage limits the word 'dialectic' to linguistic significance: otherwise we might say that the English

and European literatures were dialectic variations of one great literature. These literatures have a common evolutionary history: descent from a common ancestral stock, with the same modifying force of mediaevalism. Of course, national idiosyncrasies, individual genius of authors, the various accidents of history, come in as disturbing forces. The recognition of this unity was never so clear as at the present moment, when—the main literary interests being drama and fiction—we turn indifferently to the Norwegian Ibsen, the Swedish Strindberg, the Russian Turgenieff and Tolstoi and Dostoyevsky, the Polish Sienkiewicz, the Austrian Grillparzer and Hauptmann, the Spanish Echegaray, the Italian D'Annunzio; while the German Goethe and the French Balzac and Victor Hugo have always maintained themselves as the giants of modern creative literature. It belongs to perspective that, other things being equal, the English reader naturally selects what is English, the French reader what is French: but this is so only when other things are equal.

World literature understood in this sense is the proper field for literary culture, whether that culture be elementary or advanced. The more limited a man's opportunities for reading, the more important it becomes that he should start with a true perspective. For all of us, older or younger, Homer and the Bible are more important than Chaucer or Dryden; Greek tragedy is a prerequisite for intelligent appreciation of Shakespeare. What we have to resist is a position often taken as if it were a dictate of common sense, but which is really founded upon misapprehension: it is said, We cannot know all literature, let us make sure of our own. But this begs the question as to what constitutes "our own literature." For an English reader "our own literature" is, not what English authors have composed in the English language, but what the English-speaking civilization has absorbed from the other civilizations of the world in addition to what it has itself produced. We

should deem it a narrow historic view that would lead (say) an Englishman to express his patriotism by studying carefully the history of Britain and refusing to take any interest in the British empire. The British empire is the greatest fact in the history of Britain. Yet even the British empire is a narrow thing in comparison with the English-speaking civilization. And the English civilization—like the French, the German, the Italian civilization—is perpetually being enriched by what it can absorb of national cultures other than its own. Particular national literatures are the reflection of particular national histories: in world literature stands reflected the history of civilization.

But it belongs to the other work of mine to which I have referred to deal with the bearing of world literature upon general literary culture. The subject of the present work is the formal study of literature: and for this the only adequate field is world literature. It is an historic blunder to look for the roots of our English literature to the literature written in Anglo-Saxon and Old English. The forces which have inspired our great masters are revealed only in the broad field suggested by our Table of Literary Pedigree[1] (Chart VI, page 81): in that field the writers of Anglo-Saxon and Old English constitute a very small corner. World literature presents the literary material as an historic unity. The main stream is the Classical literature, which has had the prerogative voice in determining our literary conceptions. From the first century of the Christian era this main stream receives the sister stream of Biblical literature, potent from the first as to matter and spirit, yet still waiting for its full recognition in its bearing on literary form. The literary stream continues to receive tributaries as it passes through ages of mediaevalism, and of the separate modern

[1] It is one of the merits of Mr. Courthope's great *History of English Poetry* (Macmillan) that it is based on recognition of this fact. The first two volumes are specially important.

literatures moving under common conditions side by side. The palpable errors of traditional theory and criticism have arisen mainly from the narrowness of outlook which led to them. Only world literature—literature studied apart from distinctions between particular languages—gives a body of literary material from which it is safe to make generalizations; only in world literature can the life history of literature be fully revealed.

CHAPTER V

THE OUTER AND THE INNER STUDY OF LITERATURE

I

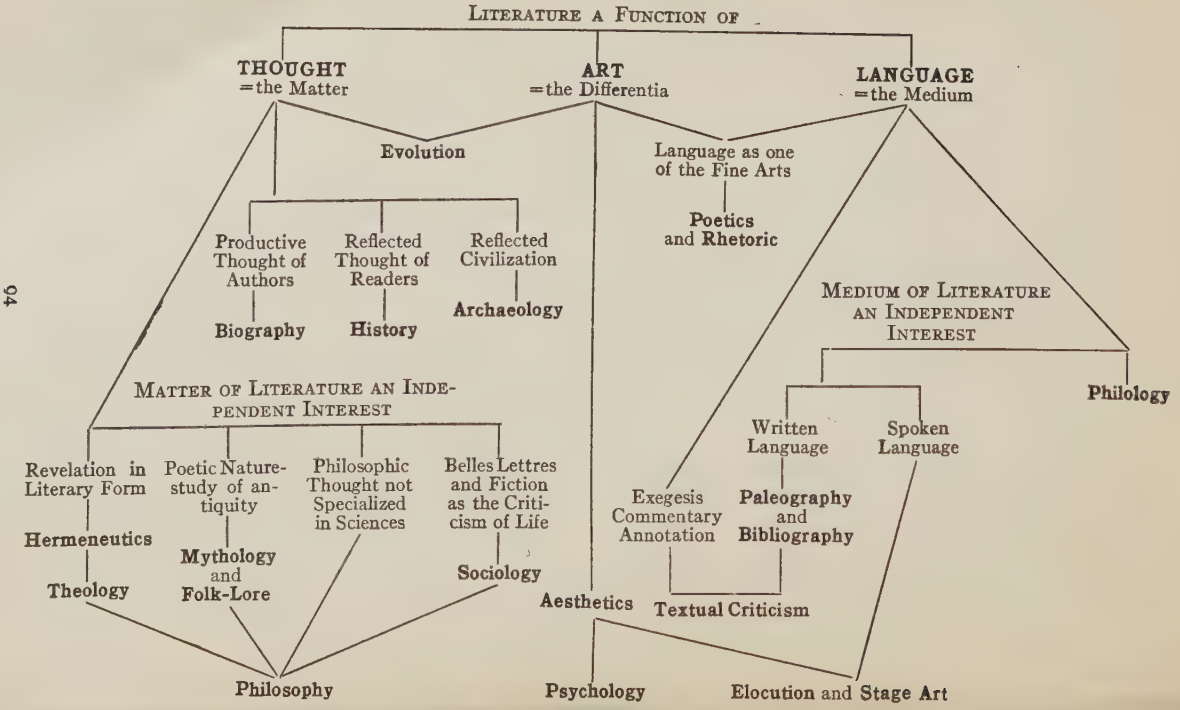
It is clear that the study of literature, by its inherent character, and in the nature of things, is one which must bring us in contact with many other distinct studies. On page 94 I have endeavored to indicate in tabular form (Chart VIII) this affiliation of literary with other studies.

For a working definition, we may consider literature as a function of thought, which is the matter of literature, and language, which is its medium. But this is not sufficient: there are obviously many things beside literature—such things as a lawyer's bill, an act of parliament, a post-office Guide—which are expressions of thought in language. The *differentia* which marks off literature from other expressions of thought in language seems to be the element of art which runs through all literary expression.

We may consider the three elements of literature separately. The thought which constitutes the matter of literature is, in the first place, the productive thought of authors; when we follow this out we are brought at length to the study of biography. Something more than authors, however, is necessary to make literature. A lunatic may write a book, and, if he can command funds, may get his book duly published and catalogued; but it requires some degree of acceptance of books—by a larger or smaller public, acceptance at the time or in some future age—in order to constitute books literature. Thus literature must reflect, not only the thinking of authors, but also the sentiment of readers who have given the particular books their currency. Successive phases of a national literature reflect successive phases of the nation's history. And thus

CHART VIII

Study of Literature and Associated Studies



the study of literature marches with the study of history. Again, creative literature, such as Homer, in addition to the particular story, reflects also the general civilization of the age in which the story is cast: accordingly, the study of literature has relations with the whole interest of archaeology.

We may note next how the matter of literature, apart from the other elements, may become in itself an independent interest: this will draw the boundaries of our study in the direction of many other distinct pursuits. In the great religions of the world we find divine revelation taking literary form: this connects the study of literature with the specific science of hermeneutics—the formal interpretation of sacred lore—and also with the broader study of theology. In primitive antiquity poetic myths seem to voice speculations upon nature and other interests which in a later age take the form of science; study of this mythologic poetry leads to the science of mythology, and the somewhat broader interest of folk-lore. Again: when philosophic thinking is fully developed, particular sciences have arisen which may be considered to stand outside what is strictly called literature: but there will always be a large amount of philosophic thought which has not been specialized in sciences, and this constitutes a part of literature. And for the subject of human life, in the broad sense, no formal science is adequate: the *belles lettres*, and fiction, have been recognized as the real "criticism of life." Such criticism of human life will have close relations with the study of sociology. And all the particular studies enumerated in this paragraph draw together in the general study of philosophy.

If we now start from the idea of art as a basis of literature, we see at once how literary study merges in the general science of aesthetics. And this science of aesthetics is inextricably interwoven with the master science of psychology. Again: putting together the matter of literature and the artistic forms in which it manifests itself, we get a body of material of

sufficient scope to illustrate processes of evolution. And the conception of evolution, in its many-sided applications, makes a complete study in itself. Or, turning to the other side of our chart, we may take in combination the medium of literature—language—and the element of art. We are thus led to the conception of language as one of the fine arts; and this gives us two studies—poetics and rhetoric—either one of which, apart from all else there is in literature, might serve as a specialty for a life work.

As we saw the matter of literature, apart from the other elements, becoming an independent interest, so is it with the medium of literature, which is language.[1] This leads us to the great science of philology, as the term is understood in English: the phenomena and principles of language, as abstracted from the comparative study of particular languages. But this is purely a study of language: the philologist, as such, has no concern with the matter of literature or with literary art. Nor is this all. We may make a distinction between written and spoken language. Study of the language of literature as written introduces the two sciences of paleography and bibliography. The first is concerned with ancient modes of writing; bibliography treats of the language of literature as embodied in books. While of course bibliographic information enters into ordinary literary study, yet it is clear that the science of bibliography goes beyond this, and makes a separate interest. It deals with the materials of books, with their typography, binding, and particulars of manufacture; with minute differences of editions; with machinery of collection and distribution, and library economics. It is quite possible to find a great collector of books who is an expert in bibliographic knowledge, and yet has little or no interest in the contents of his books, or the artistic side of literary expression.

[1] This must be understood with the reservation discussed below, in chapter xi, pages 238–39.

We may proceed a step farther. Study of the language of literature, when carried into detail, will take the form of exegesis, with its leading instruments of commentary and annotation. Put together exegesis and bibliography and we reach the science of textual criticism. It is when exegetical insight is combined with expert knowledge of bibliographical apparatus that it becomes possible to restore the literary text that has fallen into decay. Lastly, if we take the language of literature as spoken, and bring to bear upon this the aesthetic element, we are led to the art of elocution. And the application of elocution to one leading branch of literature, the drama, introduces questions of the theater, and stage art makes an expert study by itself.

Thus the review of literature, on the lines suggested by our chart, has for its net result that the study of literature in its natural development touches some twenty other studies, distinct and independent. It is obvious that questions of demarkation will arise between the boundaries of these studies and what may be considered the intrinsic study of literature itself.

What is thus suggested by the theoretic consideration of literature is abundantly confirmed by the history and traditions of the study. As appeared in the preceding chapter, the academic treatment of literature is limited by the departmental idea: in separate departments of Greek, English, German, literary study is inextricably interwoven with study of language, of history, and philosophy and art; so inextricably interwoven with study of language that the typical scholar can hardly conceive of Greek literature apart from Greek. It has usually happened that expositors of literature—whether scholastic instructors or writers of books—have been experts in other studies. Accordingly, one understands the study of literature as the study of authors, with copious biographic detail and discussion of historic surroundings. Another has an aesthetic

bias: outsiders often deride literary study as so much "raving about Shelley." A third has done good service in editing literary texts: but in his exposition of literary works the thread is lost by intrusion of *apparatus criticus* and discussion of alternative readings. Another is all for points of language. It is among my recollections of my undergraduate days that the only course in English literature I had the opportunity of attending was a course of lectures "on Shakespeare," given by a scholar of international reputation: in actual fact, the course treated only three acts of a single play, and the lectures discussed nothing but etymologies of words, an occasional question as to the meaning of a passage being resented by the professor. The leading instruments of literary study have been commentary and annotation: we have been assisted to the literature of the Bible by commentaries in six folio volumes, and the annotation to a play of Shakespeare far exceeds in bulk the play itself. But commentary means a surrender to the miscellaneous; it is a happy hunting-ground for undigested erudition. Commentaries of course have a place among books of reference, and stand in the same category as dictionaries; but it seems hard when a dictionary is offered as a guidebook. To all of which it must be added, that literature, like music, is a popular pastime: its study must encounter as disturbing forces all the complex interests of public life—amusement, gossip and fashion, burning questions of social morals; above all, the curiosity as to the ending of a story which masks as novel reading, but betrays itself in the fact that its votaries can never read the same story twice. Universal suffrage has established itself in the field of literature: every reader claims his right to an opinion, with no sense of responsibility for study preceding pronouncement.

In view of all these things it is not strange that the study of literature, as it actually exists, is found to be a chaos of miscellaneous interests; a conglomerate of bits from other pursuits in which it is difficult to trace the individuality of a great study.

The true way to meet such a situation, in my judgment, is to insist upon the recognition, as a fundamental principle, of a distinction between an Inner Study of literature and an Outer Study of literature. Something of analogy is presented by the accepted distinction between pure mathematics and applied—or, as it is sometimes called, mixed—mathematics. But mathematics has the advantage that pure mathematics came first: literature is in the difficult position that the multifarious applications have first established themselves, and the pure study has, with difficulty, to be disentangled from them. When we review the variety of interests which we have seen as distracting literary study, of not one of them can we say that it has no bearing whatever upon literature. On the other hand, if we give these disturbing interests full scope, the pure and intrinsic study of literature is completely swamped. The distinction between the Inner and the Outer Study of literature is not one that can be formulated; the boundary line is a fluctuating boundary, which must be drawn by each student for himself. Yet it is a clear gain if the distinction be recognized. For it is not the least of our difficulties that the dissipation of literary study into so many questionable channels arises, to a large extent, from a desire for thoroughness. And who dares impeach a claim for thoroughness in matters of study? Yet, in the spirit of the familiar apostrophe to Liberty, one is tempted to exclaim: O Thoroughness, how much of looseness has crept in under thy name! Thoroughness *apart from perspective* may mean thorough misleading: when the traveler, for want of a map, has taken a wrong turning, the thoroughness he puts into his walking leads him all the farther from his destination. This absence of perspective in literary study makes its weakness in comparison with other branches of culture. One who takes up physiology or history can hardly escape learning something of these sciences. But of those who—in schools, or universities, or in private reading—understand themselves to be engaged in the study of

literature, I believe that the great majority never reach it, but remain stranded in what are its outskirts.

II

In what remains of this chapter I propose to indicate some detailed distinctions that may illustrate the general separation between the Outer and the Inner Study of literature.

1. Distinguish
   - Literary Biography (Outer Study)
   - Literary Organs of Personality: Essays and Lyrics (Inner Study)

The greatest disturbing force to the pure study of literature is biography. And I would extend the term to cover the vast mass of gossip about writers and the production of their works, which is to the formal biography what the tail of a comet is to the nucleus. Many so-called histories of literature prove in fact only accounts of authors and their achievements. Indeed, according to received usage, it seems hardly possible to discuss a literary work without being expected to begin with a sketch of the author: his extraction and personal history, with examination of his genius, and of the circumstances under which he came to write what he has written. There is no such presupposition in other studies. We should think it strange if a mathematical treatise, having occasion to refer to Euler's law, or Demoivre's theorem, should turn aside to give a personal sketch of Euler and Demoivre, and an estimate of their mathematical genius. It will be objected, however, that authors stand in a closer relation to their literary productions than mathematicians to science. There is some truth in this: but it is necessary to discriminate between different kinds of literature. If the question be of creative literature—such as a drama or story—what concerns literary study is the creative product, which stands for examination whoever its author might be. The believer in the "Baconian theory," and the orthodox Shakespearean scholar,

are in exactly the same position when the question is of the content and analysis of the plays. But there are other kinds of literature in which the personality of the author is the main interest; indeed, one great use of literature is to keep us in the company of the highest minds. In these cases the error is to seek for the personality of the author in biographies and annotations written of him by others. There are certain literary forms[1] specially devoted to self-revelation of the writer. One such form is the essay—such essays as those of Bacon, of Montaigne, of Addison, or Lamb: the essential point of these essays is to display an interesting personality turned on to a variety of topics. In the same way certain kinds of lyrics, of which the sonnet is the chief, give us the crystallization of a poet's sentiment, or a passing situation. Here then personality is self-revealed, and revealed in literary form: such essays and lyrics belong to the inmost study of literature. Biography is something external, and more closely allied to history than to literature. No doubt, information about authors, appealing as it does to the most desultory reader, is an interest much more widely diffused than is appreciation of literature, which demands sustained attention. If a man prefers biography to literature, he is free to follow his choice; but in the interests of pure literary culture this biographic matter must be relegated to the Outer Study.

2. Distinguish { Literary Study (Inner) / Linguistic Studies (Outer) }

The particular language in which a piece of literature is written is a factor in literary study. But it is only a single factor among many others; and adequate translation reduces to a minimum the loss of the original language.[2] It is obvious

[1] Compare chapter viii of my *World Literature*, in which these forms are fully discussed.

[2] On this general subject compare *World Literature*, pages 3–6.

that without translation no connected and philosophic study of literature is possible. The old prejudice against the use of translated literature, which at one time went so far as to forbid the Bible in the vulgar tongue, is now all but obsolete. As we have come nearer to recognizing the unity of all literature, in the same proportion the ideal and the art of translation have developed; at the present time the greatest poets and the greatest scholars alike are seen to devote themselves to the art of transplanting masterpieces from one literary field to another. There is a real "debatable land" between the studies of language and of literature: of this I shall speak later on, in a chapter on "Language as a Factor in Literary Art."[1] But the long eclipse of literary by linguistic study has left behind it some confusion as to the boundaries of the two pursuits which is of sufficient importance to be noted here.

3. Distinguish
   - Interpretation of Exegesis or Annotation: the unit a word (Language—Outer Study)
   - Interpretation of Perspective: the unit a whole poem (Literature—Inner Study)

In all subjects exegesis, or what corresponds to it, must play a part. But the long tradition of studying literature in foreign languages, and the use of commentaries, have in literary study given undue emphasis to exegesis. In interpretation of this kind the unit is a single word or phrase; the idea is to bring light from all sources to bear upon each successive detail, with the underlying assumption that when all the details have been explained the whole has been interpreted. But this assumption is a delusion. In works of art, the whole is a different thing from the sum of the parts: it is quite possible to have mastered all the details and yet to have missed the spirit of the whole. The true literary study seeks the interpretation of perspective; which may be popularly expressed by the phrase, "A book at a

[1] Below, chapter xxvi.

single view." Its attitude is ever to keep in view the work as a whole: to lay emphasis on the general drift—the *Zusammenhang*, or structure, or interrelation of parts; if the details are obscure, to sweep over the ground a second and a third time—or it may be a tenth and a twentieth time—and see the obscurity of the details vanish in the light of the whole. Exegesis of particular passages will be valuable as a supplement to this; the mistake is to think that exegesis by itself could interpret anything. A simple illustration of the two treatments is found in the difference between seeing a play presented on the stage and reading the same play in an annotated edition. The stage, considered as an interpreter, may work under every disadvantage: actors and managers are constituted by histrionic powers, not by literary insight; the aim may be to follow merely traditional interpretation, or to seek other interpretation because it is novel. Yet it is hardly possible to see a stage interpretation, however imperfect, without catching a vivid impression of the play, although it may be an impression that needs correction. In the case of the commentary, although the scholarship may be of the best, yet the chances are that the impression given of the play as a whole is loose and vague. What is left at the end is a sense of copious explaining—often exegetical explanation of difficulties which the process of exegesis has itself raised; but the concentration on the details has dissipated the connection of the whole and the end of the exposition has forgotten the beginning.

We can hardly emphasize too strongly the literary principle that the general structure of a work of art, rather than the accumulation of its details, is the key to its interpretation. To many readers it might seem a dry technicality to insist that the line of movement for a particular poem was the regular arch. Yet this conception of an arch movement, besides being beautiful in itself, is full of interpretative suggestiveness. An arch implies a turning-point in the center; this turning-point is also

the foundation of the whole, for in its keystone lies the stability of the arch; again, the principle of symmetry comes in, and for every point on the one side of the keystone we look for something corresponding to it on the other side. Let us apply this, say, to the Prophecy of Joel.[1] (The arch scheme [Chart IX] appears on page 105.)[2] The poem is a series of seven visions: the fourth or central vision makes the keystone. The first vision is a starting-point which presents the Land of Judah desolate and mourning: successive choruses of Old Men, Revelers, Priests, Husbandmen, lament particular aspects of the desolation, and then all draw together in a national picture of distress. With the second vision—higher up the ascending half of the movement—the trouble has intensified: judgment is advancing to a crisis. The sound of the trumpet seemed to announce a day of judgment; mysterious forces of destruction are advancing—

> The land is as the Garden of Eden before them,
> And behind them a desolate wilderness;

they are now among the houses of the city, and amid rocking earthquake is heard a Voice that must be the Voice of Jehovah. Higher still in the ascending movement, the third vision commences with a great surprise: the Voice of Jehovah is a voice calling to repentance—

> Rend your hearts and not your garments—

and in the Chorus of the Whole People there is a stirring of response—

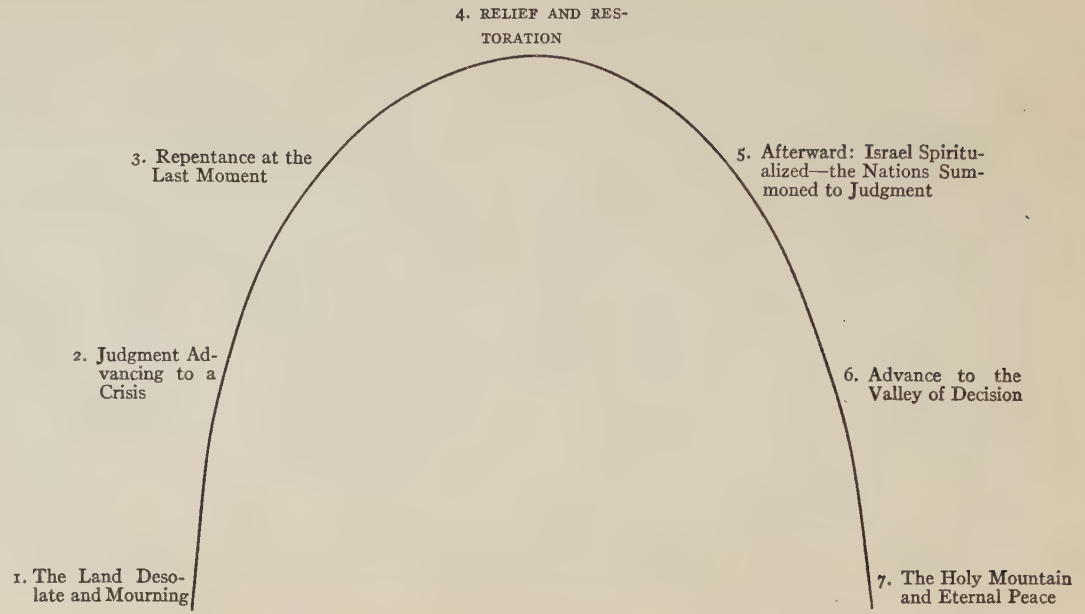
> Who knoweth whether he will not turn and repent, and leave a blessing behind him?

[1] The prophecy should be read in the text of the *Modern Reader's Bible*, which brings out the literary structure.

[2] For other illustrations of the arch form of movement compare below, pages 191–93, 393; or corresponding parts of my other works on Shakespeare (*Thinker*, pages 331 ff.; *Artist*, see Index under word "Arch").

CHART IX

The Arch Movement in the Prophecy of Joel


4. RELIEF AND RESTORATION
3. Repentance at the Last Moment
5. Afterward: Israel Spiritualized—the Nations Summoned to Judgment
2. Judgment Advancing to a Crisis
6. Advance to the Valley of Decision
1. The Land Desolate and Mourning
7. The Holy Mountain and Eternal Peace

The Chorus of the Whole People, led by the Priests, appeal for mercy. So we reach the keystone of the arch with the words—

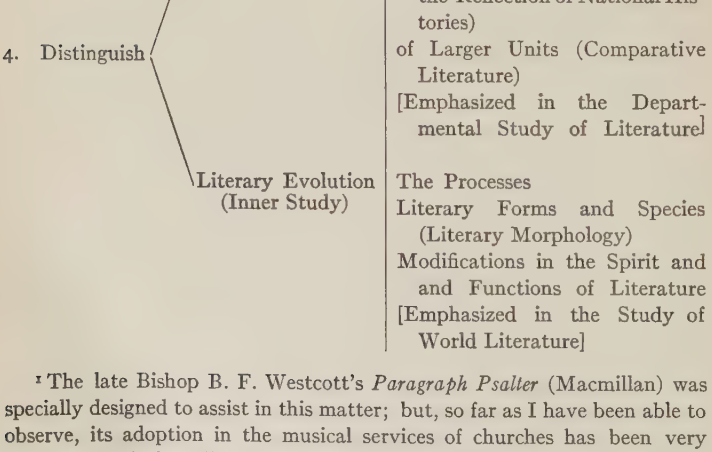
> Then was the LORD jealous for his land, and had pity on his people.

It is a transformation of the desolate scene, for what Jehovah speaks realizes itself instantly to the imagination. But the poem cannot end here. There is a further stage—beginning the descending half of the arch—a stage of sanctification poured from above upon high and low, young and old; if signs of judgment appear, it is now judgment on behalf of Judah and against the nations her foes. The descending movement brings a sixth vision—this new judgment advancing to a crisis: voices summon the nations of the earth, voices summon the heavenly hosts, to the "valley of the LORD'S decision"; the prophetic spectator has a glimpse of "multitudes, multitudes in the valley of the LORD'S decision." All is swallowed up in darkness and earthquake: these pass, and the seventh vision is of the Holy Mountain and Eternal Peace. What the arch structure has symbolized is a clear progression, bound into still clearer unity by effects of symmetry. The seventh vision of the Holy Mountain stands opposed to the opening vision of a land desolate and mourning; if the second vision is of judgment *on* Judah advancing to a crisis, the sixth vision gives us judgment *for* Judah advancing to the valley of Jehovah's decision; the third stage of repentance at the last moment is balanced by the fifth stage of an "afterward" of sanctification; and the center of the whole is turning from judgment to mercy. Structural interpretation has given us a conception as artistically beautiful as it is spiritually convincing. And there is still room for the interpretation of exegesis to deal with particular details: with the riddling suggestions of a locust plague that might possibly shadow an occasion for the poem; or with the much-discussed apostrophe to Tyre and Zidon—expanded out of

proportion to its place in the scheme—and the recognized doubt whether this is a later interpolation.

Interpreting a poem resolves itself, ultimately, into grasping its unity. In the case of complex works, like the plays of Shakespeare, this unity will often be a harmony of separate elements, each complete in itself; but such harmony is itself a form of unity. In the shortest and simplest lyrics, it is quite possible to have read with intelligence, and even enjoyment, and yet to have failed to catch the interpretative unity. I am tempted to offer a rather extreme illustration which has fallen within my own experience. I once heard a cultured lady—referring to the popular hymn, "Nearer, My God, to Thee"—at one moment remark that this was her favorite hymn, and the next moment express delighted surprise at a reference to the connection of the hymn with the incident of Jacob's Dream. This seemed to me so extraordinary that I have had the curiosity to use this lyric as a touchstone in somewhat extensive testings. Incredible as it will appear to some of my readers, I am satisfied in my own mind that the greater part even of educated people who know that hymn have never seen how it is founded on the well-known incident of Scripture; people of taste, and people prominent in the religious world, have admitted as much to me—I have my suspicions of a certain bishop! Yet, surely, without that guiding clue the famous hymn becomes a mere hubbub of pious phrases. The significance has been lost, not from lack of taste or intelligence, but because unity and connection were not the things looked for. Similar considerations would apply to the Psalms of the Bible, which have come down to us broken up into verses. If we note the reading or chanting of the Psalms in church—perhaps with suggestive accompaniment from an accomplished organist—it will almost always appear that what is attracting attention is particular phrases, or single verses; there will rarely be found any indication that the general movement of the

poem—its rapid changes of drift, or working to climaxes—has been caught.[1] Of course, in many lyrics the author's title marks the significance of the whole. Where this is lacking, merely to feel after the unity, even though we may not be able to formulate it in a title, puts us into the right interpretative attitude. The very soul of a poem is its unity. One encounters a man lying asleep on a bench: all the separate parts that make up the man—his various limbs and features—are seen, but without any binding consciousness. Let the sleeper be awakened by the sound of a trumpet: at once he springs into an attitude of alertness, his muscles all in mutual co-operation, the features of the face in the unity we call expression. Like the change from sleep to waking is the interpretative beauty that comes into a poem when its unity has been grasped.


4. Distinguish
Literary History (Outer Study)
Literary Evolution (Inner Study)
Particular Products of Individuals (Literary Biography)
of Nations (National Literatures the Reflection of National Histories)
of Larger Units (Comparative Literature)
[Emphasized in the Departmental Study of Literature]
The Processes
Literary Forms and Species (Literary Morphology)
Modifications in the Spirit and and Functions of Literature
[Emphasized in the Study of World Literature]

[1] The late Bishop B. F. Westcott's *Paragraph Psalter* (Macmillan) was specially designed to assist in this matter; but, so far as I have been able to observe, its adoption in the musical services of churches has been very rare. A musical application of Bishop Westcott's principles to Ps. 78 has been composed by the late Dr. J. S. Naylor, organist of York Minster (Novello).

History implies observation and record; as applied to past events in the usual meaning of the word, or as applied to things when we speak of natural history. It is thus the basis upon which all other studies are founded. This applies to the study of literature, as well as to the rest. But here we may make one more distinction between the Outer and the Inner Study of literature. Literary history, as seen in the ordinary usage of the term, belongs in the main to the Outer Study. It concerns itself with particular productions of literature: productions of individuals, the history of which becomes literary biography; and productions of nations, the national literatures being the reflection of the national histories. Comparative literature, as determined by usage, deals with units larger than the unit of the nation. It will, for example, take up from the literary side the whole of Europe during the Renaissance or other special epoch; it is not usually extended to comprehend the relation of modern with ancient literature, or to the analysis of literature as a whole. All this is emphasized in the departmental study of literature. When history comes to be applied to literature in general, or to that modification of it which in this work is called world literature, such literary history tends largely to take the form of literary evolution. Evolution is concerned with the processes underlying the production of literature rather than with the particular products. It deals with the forms and species that make up literary morphology; or with modifications in the spirit and functions of literature, which it is the province of literary criticism to consider. Such evolutionary analysis constitutes the innermost part of the study of literature. Distinctions analogous to this are to be found in other regions of the field of philosophy. We may hear from a statistician that so many millions of carnation flowers pass in a single year through the market of a particular city. This fact may be important to the science of geography, which includes the question of floral distribution; it is of no import

whatever to the study of botany. The structure of a carnation, and its affiliations with near or distant species of the floral kingdom, are the concern of botanic science, and these remain the same whether the number of particular carnation flowers be reckoned by tens or by millions in any geographical region. There is a geographical—or national—side to the study of literature, which may differ widely from the science of literature in general.

There is nothing in what is here said derogatory to literary history. Perhaps there is no field in which so large an amount of excellent scholarship is at work as in the investigation of literary origins. What I deprecate is the offering of this as if it were the study of literature itself. In the pure study of literature questions of literary origin are a means to an end: they are the end itself in the study of history.

The distinction thus suggested must, however, be regarded as a distinction only of emphasis. The two things overlap. Literary evolution makes itself felt in the literature of a particular country, or even in the productions of an individual author. And literary history enters into the inner study of literature, as furnishing the literary material on which evolution can work; the very idea of world literature rests upon an historic survey. What is to be resisted is the common idea that the history of literature—literature being conceived as a unity—is to be found in the aggregation of histories of particular literatures. To study general literature in aggregations of particular literatures is to miss the most important point—the interconnection of different literatures, and their mutual influence. Moreover, the perspective is different in the different studies: Spenser will be one thing in a survey of Elizabethan literature, another thing in the history of English literature, yet another thing in a comprehensive view of world literature. Literary history, as we generally understand the term, comes nearer to the study of history than to the study of literature.

If a man reads—say in Mr. Gosse's excellent series[1]—the history of Greek, of German, of Italian literature, he must feel that what he is following is much more the history of ancient Greece, of Germany, of Italy, than the history of literature. Literary history, as traditionally treated, constitutes the literary side of history, not the historic aspect of literature.

5. Distinguish
- Literary Structure: Analysis of a work as it stands from the viewpoint of Literary Unity (Inner Study)
- Historic (or Genetic) Structure: Accidental traces impressed upon a work by the circumstances of its Origin (Outer Study)

In the general revival of the Humanities under the influence of modern ideas the study of history had a long priority over the study of literature. As a result, there has been considerable confusion and misunderstanding as to the boundaries of the two studies. This affects the analysis of structure in a given work of literature: and we have to distinguish between analysis of the work as it is—which belongs to literature and its Inner Study—and another kind of structure—belonging to the Outer Study of literary history—which represents, not what the work is, but how it has become what it is.

The modern study of Shakespeare in its earlier phases represented the historic element. It was deemed important to ascertain the dates of particular plays, both with reference to the biographical question of development in Shakespeare's artistic powers, and also to the place of the plays in the history of English literature.[2] Often there would be external evidence on such points. But also internal evidence was sought: tests

[1] *Literatures of the World*, edited by Edmund Gosse (Appleton).

[2] Dr. Furnival's Introduction to the *Leopold Shakespeare* (Cassell), or to Bunnett's translation of Gervinus' *Commentaries* (Smith, Elder & Co., 1877), or F. E. Fleay's *Shakespeare Manual* (Macmillan), illustrate this branch of scholarship.

of rhyme and verse-endings, and other matters of technique, were invented, by aid of which plays could be chronologically grouped. Nor was this all. In view of the well-known fact that dramatists of the period were accustomed to work in collaboration, the same tests were applied to questions of joint authorship: it was found possible to discriminate between the work of collaborators. All this is in place as an element in literary history: but it has no bearing whatever on the analysis of the plays as they stand considered as literary units. The question whether a play has one or several authors cannot affect the purely literary analysis of the play: its plot and movement, the character development, the thought and diction, and the philosophic ideas underlying it.[1] An interesting illustration of the historic method is its application to the play of *Henry the Eighth*, which, with considerable agreement, textual critics have determined to be the work of Shakespeare in collaboration with Fletcher. It is claimed that the respective contributions of the two authors can be precisely distinguished; and as a result passages traditionally assumed to be the most Shakespearean of Shakespearean quotations—such as the speeches of Wolsey on his fall—have to be attributed to Fletcher.[2] But this makes no difference to literary analysis of the poem. We should think it strange if, in a performance of *Henry the Eighth*, complaint was made that the actors gave no sign when, in the middle of a scene, they were passing from the poetry of Shakespeare to the poetry of Fletcher.

There is a yet more important region of literature in which this confusion between historical structure and purely literary analysis has been found to prevail. Everyone is aware that the keenest historical analysis has been applied to the litera-

[1] I have applied the same argument to Biblical works in the Introduction to Deuteronomy in *The Modern Reader's Bible.*

[2] Compare Mr. Gollancz' Introduction to the play in the *Temple Shakespeare* (Dent).

ture we call the Bible. Such historic criticism has determined that the earlier books are constituted by the combination of ancient records, such as a record emanating from priestly sources, another distinguished by the name Elohim, another by the name Jehovah. It is claimed that the component elements can, by internal evidence, be accurately discriminated.[1] Analysis of a similar kind has been applied to the prophetic and poetic books: here (it is claimed) in what on the surface appears continuous it is possible to detect, and to date, component elements coming from different sources; and that in this way the Bible can be chronologically reconstructed. Now, it is evident that whatever validity such historic criticism has is validity in the field of history, and that it has no bearing on the purely literary analysis of Scripture. So here again we have to distinguish between literary and historic structure. The purely literary study of the Bible is the analysis of the Bible as it is, analysis by literary methods and from the viewpoint of literary unity. It is illustrated in the *Modern Reader's Bible*.[2] What this essays to do is to examine the Bible as it stands; to separate—by internal evidence—the books or other literary units which successively compose it, to determine their literary form—as epic and dramatic, verse, prose, and the like—and (as is done with all other literature) present these to the eye in a mode that reflects the actual literary structure. Historical structure traced in the same material is illustrated by the *Polychrome Bible*:[3] which ingeniously uses colors, like the coloring of maps, to warn the reader where in his reading he is passing from a passage that has its origin (for example) in the priestly tradition to a passage that originally emanated from a different

[1] The most convenient authority for this type of study is the late S. R. Driver's *Introduction to Old Testament Literature* (Clark).

[2] Published by Macmillan. Compare above, page 68.

[3] Published by Dodd, Mead & Co., New York; James Clarke & Co., London.

source. The two analyses are clearly independent things: one belongs to literary history and so to the Outer Study, the other is a purely literary analysis. To take a specific example. In the much-discussed Book of Deuteronomy, if we adopt the ordinary symbols for the different sources—P, J, E, JE, D—the historic structure of the book comes out something like this:

chap. 1—27:4	D
27:5—27:7 (*a*)	JE
27:7 (*b*)—31:13	D
31:14–22	JE
31:23–30	D
32: 1–44	JE
32:45–47	D
32:48–52	P

etc.

Literary analysis determines this Book of Deuteronomy to be a succession of orations and songs, with connecting matter, in such sequence as to present a dramatic situation developed to an impressive climax. The literary structure comes out like this:

chap. 1:1–2	Title-page
1:3–5	Preface to Oration I
1:6—4:40	Oration I
4:41–43	Note to Oration I
4:44—5:1	Preface to Oration II
5:1—chap. 11	Oration II
chaps. 12–26	The Book of the Covenant referred to in the previous Oration
chap. 27	Preface to Oration III
28	Oration III

etc.

It is perfectly clear that these two structures are different in kind, and have no bearing the one on the other. Yet in the

general study of the Bible the historic and the literary analysis are constantly confused: the critical analysis, which deals with the question how our Bible originated, and therefore belongs to the Outer Study of literary history, is somehow understood to be an interpretation of what the Bible is. It becomes necessary to lay down as a principle: *The literary structure of a work cannot possibly be affected by any theory as to its origin.* We are familiar with many theories as to the historic origin of Deuteronomy: (1) that it was written by Moses; (2) that it is an imaginative work composed in the reign of Josiah; (3) that traditions of the farewell of Moses to Israel, such as appear in Leviticus, were worked up into the form of our Deuteronomy at a much later date; (4) that the 'Book of the Law' discovered in the reign of Josiah was substantially our Deuteronomy, but received many later additions or corrections. Assume any one of these views to be true: how can it affect the question whether the Deuteronomy we have is or is not correctly analyzed as a succession of orations and songs with their connecting matter?

All this makes one more reason for insisting upon that which is the subject of the present chapter, the necessity of recognizing a distinction between the Outer and the Inner literary study. By a long tradition literature has been studied only in entanglement with other studies—of biography, language, history. The boundary line between literature and the rest has been obscured. All that here is assigned to the Outer literary study has, no doubt, relevance to the subject of literature, yet is distinct from the essential study itself. The Outer Study has responsibility for the total output of particular authors or nations or epochs: the Inner Study recognizes only what part of this discloses features of literary evolution, or in some other way has significance in the conception of literature as a whole. What is especially to be resisted is the common idea that such biographic, linguistic, historic adjunct to literary study is a prerequisite without which the study of literature cannot be

sound. On the contrary, there is a pure study of literature which is entirely independent, and which has a field, a method, a scholarship of its own. No doubt, one who would be expert in any subject will do well to acquaint himself with many adjoining fields of study. But one who is attracted to the pure study of literature as literature need not think that he must first exhaust the subsidiary and external provinces. He need not keep himself forever in the region of *knowing about* literature instead of setting himself to *know* the literature as it is.

BOOK III

LITERARY EVOLUTION

AS REFLECTED IN THE HISTORY OF WORLD LITERATURE

CHAPTER VI : The Differentiation of Poetry and Prose
CHAPTER VII : Evolution in Epic Poetry
CHAPTER VIII: Evolution in Drama
CHAPTER IX : Evolution in Lyric Poetry

CHAPTER VI

THE DIFFERENTIATION OF POETRY AND PROSE

The evolution of our world literature, as we have seen, takes form as a continuous movement. Its first stage is the ancient Classical literature of Greece and Rome: in this we are able to trace the earliest steps of literary development from the embryonic literature of the ballad dance. There comes a point when the Hellenic literature mingles with other factors of our world literature, drawn in as tributaries into a river. The Christianization of the Roman Empire brings in Hebraic literature; in the course of the Middle Ages are added those types of literature we sum up as Romantic. The movement continues in our modern world, and we see the later stages of literary evolution up to the floating literature of the periodical. In this continuous movement one of the most conspicuous of literary phenomena is the gradual differentiation of poetry and prose. The reader will remember that the question is not of verse and prose: poetry is creative literature, however expressed, and is adding to the sum of existences; prose has the function of discussing what is already in existence. But poetry and prose are not two classes of literature, mutually exclusive. The distinction between them is expressed by the characteristic term of evolution—*differentiation;* the rise of a newer form out of an older form, with a tendency to become gradually more and more separate. It is a branching out: the branch had a potential existence in the trunk, and, while becoming ever farther separated, yet is always influenced by its connection of origin with trunk and root. So, at one end of the process we are observing we have poetry as universal literature, creation lending itself to the function of discussion which has no other organ through which to express itself; at the other end we have a pure prose,

which—as in the discussional literature of modern science—rejects everything creative. There are intervening stages in which the functions of creation and discussion have become entangled. The gradual differentiation of poetry and prose is the subject of the present chapter: subsequent chapters will deal with the evolution of poetry in its main forms.

Chart X on pages 122–23 is intended to suggest the leading features of this fundamental and long-extended process of evolution, the differentiation of poetry and prose.

Poetry, as the universal literature of primitive life, must, among other functions, perform the function of philosophy. This embryonic philosophy must admit creative treatment, there being as yet no literary medium of prose to emphasize the separation of discussion from creation. Thus a large element in early poetry is mythology: creative story is the form taken by the speculative thought of the early world. Again: the Homeric poems give us elaborate catalogues of national contingents making up the Grecian and Trojan forces; similarly, their later imitations give us catalogues of allies (in Virgil), and of Argonauts (in Apollonius); all these are contributions to the dawning interest in ethnology. The long-drawn wanderings of Io in the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus indicate geographical interest entering into poetry. The Hesiodic *Works and Days* is a manual of farming life in the form of epic poetry. In such embryonic philosophy may be included the whole literature of gnomic sayings, traditional proverbs, and riddles. The construction of the primitive riddle—for example, the Riddle of the Sphinx—is clearly creation. And in the sayings of the Wise Men—even if they be as brief as "Know thyself," or "Nothing in excess"—the epigrammatic point seems to be the counterpart of creative form; and this epigrammatic form may explain how these sayings have been able to maintain themselves in ages of oral literature without the aid of verse.

In time there arises a great literature of prose: of history, philosophy, oratory. The idea of discussion as a function distinct from creation is now fully established; and it is not surprising to find the sense of separateness reflecting itself in a distinction of rhythm as great as that between verse and prose. In the great masters of early Greek prose we can see symptoms of the transition. Herodotus is justly called the Father of History: his work gives us volumes of epic anecdote—delightful outpourings of travel talk, but not demanded by the general course of his work—before he settles down to the main topic of the Persian War. When history is more fully established in Thucydides, we still find, side by side with subtle historic analysis, the creative element of imagined speeches. The transitional stage is even clearer in philosophy. Aristotle, second of the great masters, may read wholly like modern philosophy; but it is otherwise with Plato. As regards philosophic matter, Plato may represent philosophy as the modern world conceives it. In manner of putting, Plato's philosophy is creative: not absolute discussion, but dialogue; and this highly dramatic dialogue, involving full characterization of speakers and movement of plot. In the greater part of Plato's works, the dominant interest seems to be, not systematization of the truth, but delight in the instrument of inquiry. Plato dramatizes philosophic processes of thinking.[1]

Whenever a type of literature has once established itself, it remains as a model which may, in future and very different ages, beget imitations, the type thus maintaining itself as a literary species. The poetic philosophy of which we have been speaking survives by imitation in the period of fully developed prose. In a late age of Roman literature we thus have Lucretius: in his great poem, what reads like modern chemical science is made to harmonize with apostrophes to mythological personages, epic pictures of incidents like the sacrifice of Iphigenia,

[1] Compare *World Literature*, pages 19, 409–10.

CHART X

Differentiation of Poetry and Prose

I. Ancient Classical Literature

Poetry as primitive universal literature

Poetry as embryonic philosophy before the rise of prose	Mythology as primitive speculative thought
	Compare Homeric catalogues—such works as Hesiod's *Works and Days*
	Traditional gnomes, proverbs, riddles

Rise of prose literature: of history, philosophy, oratory

Symptoms of the transitional stage	Herodotus: wavering between epic anecdotes of travel talk and formal history of the Persian War—the imagined speeches in Thucydides
	Plato: dramatization of philosophic processes of thought
Survival (by imitation) of poetic philosophy in periods of fully developed prose	Compare Lucretius—Virgil's *Georgics* and Ovid's *Fasti*
	In the modern world such a curiosity of literature as Tusser's *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry:* artificial revival of primitive gnomic wisdom

II. The Turning-Point in the history of thought is the NEW THOUGHT of the Renaissance, based on supremacy of INDUCTIVE treatment (Observation and Verification)

(Not induction as a term of logic, but as a habit of thought—not that induction supersedes other thought processes, but that it becomes the standard to which results are ultimately referred)

with its three characteristic features	Wide extension of the field of inquiry
	Co-operation and increasing division of labor or specialization
	Value of fragmentary and tentative thinking as material for future systematization

This involves a literary medium of pure prose from which creation is wholly excluded

III. Thought as it specializes tends to pass out of general literature into

Technical literature	The sciences (including philosophy as a science correlating other sciences)
	The practical arts
	Legal and statistical writing
	Commentary and the literature of scholarship
with characteristic literary forms	The treatise, manual, and the like
	Records and documents
	Commentaries or annotations
	Books of reference
	Papers and proceedings of societies
	Scientific journalism

differentiated from general prose by specialties of technical style

IV. Modern Prose Literature of Thought Not Specialized—with literary style as a concomitant interest, and readily admitting creative modifications

includes	Modern philosophy: in contrast with Biblical Wisdom, on the one side, and philosophic science on the other side
	Writers such as Fiske or William James in contrast with Herbert Spencer
	Historians like Froude or Macaulay in contrast with Hallam or Freeman—Carlyle's history highly creative

V. Literature (Poetry and Prose) as Specialized Thought: miscellaneous literature the only organ for the Science and Practical Art of LIFE

(in the full sense of the word, as distinguished from sciences treating particular aspects of life, like biology, psychology, ethics, sociology, etc.)

includes	Biblical Wisdom as archetype of philosophy which is the contemplation, not the analysis, of life
	Oriental Wisdom (Indian, Chinese, Persian, Arabian) readily assimilates with our world literature at this point
	Classical Wisdom, including Cicero [*Friendship* and *Old Age*] —Seneca's philosophy—Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius
	Modern Wisdom (compare *In Memoriam*—large part of works of Wordsworth, Browning, etc.—Martin Tupper—Walt Whitman)
	The literature of personality [including biography, lyrics, essays (verse and prose)]
	Satire, ancient and modern
	Fiction as the experimental side of human science
	The popular magazine: the floating literature of current life

scornful remonstrances of a personified Nature with an imaginary individual shrinking from death. Virgil's *Georgics* is in the main a practical art of agriculture; but this is not found incompatible with story digressions and picturesque descriptions. The creative element that makes poetry does not consist merely in imagined personages and incidents: it extends to epithets and descriptive touches inspired rather by delight in beauty than adequacy to facts. The general atmosphere of the *Georgics* is in the highest degree poetic. And these poems are imitations of originals going back to the age of poetic philosophy. As late as the Elizabethan age we find—as a curiosity of literature—honest Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*.[1] This has not the smallest resemblance to the *Georgics* of Virgil. Neither can it be dismissed as a mere verse mnemonic, like—

> Thirty days hath September,
> April, June, and November—

where there is nothing creative. In all its monthly husbandries, and abstracts of the monthly husbandries in short lines, in its acrostics, and "linked verses," its sonnets, its creed and devotional musings, we find as much poetic architecture as goes to make a literary sonnet sequence. Its matter seems to constitute it a Whole Duty of Husbandmen. If its style suggests doggerel, it also suggests that doggerel may be lifted into literature. Morphologically considered, it seems an artificial revival of primitive gnomic poetry and wisdom.

In the history of thought that underlies the evolution we are tracing, the turning-point is the New Thought of the Renaissance, based upon the supremacy of inductive treatment. As has been remarked in the Introduction to the present work,[2]

[1] Contained in Southey's *British Poets*.

[2] Above, page 5.

this does not mean the supersession of one logical system by another; what it means is that results, however obtained, will ultimately be tested by positive observation. And this becomes the characteristic habit of thought for the modern world.

It may be said, speaking generally, that three different habits of thinking have distinguished three great ages. Ancient philosophy was accustomed to think from the Whole to the Details; mediaeval philosophy, from Details to Details; modern philosophy, from Details toward the Whole through Grouping. An ancient philosopher, or school of philosophy, commenced with some view of the universe as a whole, and proceeded to elucidate this in detail. Thales laid down that the varieties of things were so many modifications of water; Heraclitus, that the one constant thing in the universe was change. It was the same with moral philosophy. Each system would start with some fundamental conception of morals as a whole—as, for example, the complete subordination of the individual to the state: the *Republic* of Plato carries out this assumption to the smallest details, incidentally abolishing marriage and family life, in order that all individuals, undistracted by other ties, may be at the disposal of the governing class. Such systems are often intricate and subtle to a high degree; but in each case the ancient philosopher assumes that he must interpret life or the universe as whole; and if some different interpretation gains currency, the earlier system is wholly overthrown. The Scholasticism of the Middle Ages was a strange union between philosophy and ecclesiastical dogma:[1] here questions that can be considered as 'wholes' have been settled authoritatively; the scope of philosophy is in the details of contingencies. To take the satiric examples of Erasmus: the church gives the dogma of the Trinity, but philosophy may debate whether it is conceivable that the First Person in the Trinity might have hated the Second; the church lays down the fact of the Incarnation, but

[1] Compare *World Literature*, pages 37–40.

philosophy may inquire in what other conceivable ways the Deity might have been manifested. Thus, in the Middle Ages, not only has the field of philosophy changed from natural and moral to theological, but further, synthetic interpretation has become subordinate to disputation, with its mere wandering from detail to detail. In the luminous words of Bacon, the schoolmen's "method of handling a knowledge" was "upon every particular position or assertion to frame objections, and to those objections, solutions; which solutions were for the most part not confutations, but distinctions." In contrast with all this, it is the characteristic of modern philosophy to commence with observation of positive details which can be verified; to group such observations into a suggestion of principles; to proceed to larger and larger groupings, with more and more comprehensive principles; to be ever moving in the direction of some final grouping—attainable in some far future—by which enlarging principles will resolve into an interpretation of the whole. The universe may be conceived as a tangled skein of silk, which it is the business of philosophy to unravel. The ancient philosopher had an intuition that this apparent tangle was in reality a form of 'cat's cradle,' and that, if he could only get in his finger sat the right points, one pull would resolve the whole into a single loop. But while successive schools of philosophy were trying different points, the skein remained in entanglement. The mediaeval philosopher failed to disentangle the skein for an excellent reason—that his hands were tied behind his back: but, so long as he did not touch, his mind was free to imagine the course of a thread as it disappeared in a knot, and speculate as to its meanderings that were out of sight. The modern philosopher begins with the knot that is closest to his finger, and with patience can untie it, and proceed to the knot that stands next; he does not expect himself to disentangle the skein, but he will leave it with so many fewer knots to his successors.

It is obvious that such New Thought, with positive observation as its supreme standard, demands for its medium of literary expression a pure prose, from which creative thinking is wholly excluded. But the modification of the medium goes farther than this. There are three characteristic features of the New Thought. One is the wide extension of the field of inquiry. No dignity of philosophy may limit itself to worthy topics: the whole surface of things to its remotest corner is to be observed. Science in our own day is mainly occupied with observing things too remote to be seen with the naked eye. A characteristic interest of the present moment is the ransacking the rubbish heaps and waste-paper baskets of early centuries for material that is revolutionizing the scholar's conception of New Testament Greek. Again: the New Thought has involved the infinite division of labor. We have seen it as a limitation upon the ancient philosopher that he felt obliged to solve the whole universe himself; modern philosophy is a co-operation of all mankind throughout all ages in the search for universal truth. Such co-operation implies ever-increasing specialization. In the third place, a value attaches to fragmentary and tentative thinking as material for future systematization. Ancient philosophy, where it failed at all, failed altogether. The smallest result of inductive observation—with printed records to preserve it—remains to enter into the science of the future. If a patient investigation has obtained only negative results, it has at all events flagged off a region from detaining the investigators of the future.

Thought as it thus specializes tends to pass out of general literature into a different field of extraneous literature, that is perhaps best summed up under the name 'technical.' To this belong the separate sciences, the practical arts, the various types of legal and statistical writings. To literature itself is added the commentary on literature; there is a distinct field of scholarship, with its appeal from scholars to other scholars.

Technical literature has its own characteristic literary forms: the treatise and manual; records and documents; commentaries and annotations; books of reference of all kinds; papers and proceedings of societies; literary journalism. The whole mass of this is differentiated from prose literature in general by its specialization of style and expression; and each separate art has its own technical phraseology. It is the coming in of private property in language, like the private property in land seen side by side with the public domain. A nomenclature more Greek than English; the coalescence of words into accepted formulas; the constant recurrence of particular idioms; to say 'potency' rather than 'power'; the free use of 'function' as a verb; to get the words 'concept' and 'cognition' as many times as possible upon a page: things like these are so many warning posts to literary readers not to trespass upon technical ground. Such technical terms are the shorthand of language; they are a literary algebra, that replaces literary words—glowing with vitality and polarized with associations—by newly coined expressions as lifeless as *x*, *y*, *z*.

There remains a modern prose literature of thought not specialized; a criterion of this is that with interest of exposition literary style is a concomitant interest. We distinguish such a modern philosophy, on the one side from wisdom literature, that is the contemplation of life rather than its analysis; and on the other side from the philosophic science which is impelled to express itself in technical phraseology. We feel a difference between writers like John Fiske or William James and writers like Herbert Spencer; historians like Froude or Macaulay and historians like Hallam or Freeman. This medium of literary prose can to a certain extent admit of creative modifications. A Greek historian had no difficulty in introducing an imaginary speech. Macaulay cannot do that; but the carefully ascertained drift of polemic opinion in a political

crisis he can present as if the personified parties were speaking.[1] The Henry the Eighth of Froude (as we have seen[2]) is not a free creation like the Henry the Eighth of Shakespeare; neither is it the residuary minimum of what can be positively asserted of that original English monarch. It is a creative personality offered as a scientific hypothesis for explaining the perplexing facts of record. Like the use of historical novels as an adjunct to the study of history, such devices bring in the imagination as an ally to the analytic faculty. And with such an historian as Carlyle the creative element can go much farther, and we have a blend of history and epic.

But the differentiation of poetry and prose is not yet complete. So far, the suggestion is that the observation which is the foundation of modern thought must be extended over the whole field of what there is to be observed, and that as it is extended it will map itself out in several provinces, each with its own medium of technical expression. But there is one province of thought—perhaps the most important of all—which steadily refuses to be specialized. Where is there to be found the special science or art of human life? Many sciences touch life, but they deal only with particular aspects of it: biology treats the physical basis of life, sociology treats human life in aggregations, psychology and ethics are concerned with only single elements of life. The question is of LIFE as a concrete whole, of what we mean when we speak of "seeing life." It is literature—in the most miscellaneous sense of the word, alike poetry and prose—that stands as the only organ for the science and practical art of LIFE; in this one case general literature has to perform the function of specialized thought. And this is

[1] Compare his *History of England*, chapter ix (passage on changing Tory opinion under James II).

[2] Above, pages 48–49.

the meaning of Matthew Arnold, when he uses his favorite word and tells us that literature is the 'criticism of life.'[1]

To literature of this type belongs,[2] in the first place, the wisdom literature of the Bible, archetype of the philosophy that is the contemplation rather than the analysis of life; in such philosophy there is no distinction of poetry and prose. Of the same spirit is the wisdom of the Orient: so far as it is wisdom, and not formal philosophy, it is readily assimilated by the western mind. Classical literature has its wisdom: particularly in the philosophy of Seneca, and the sayings of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius. There is, again, a modern wisdom literature. Perhaps the most characteristic example of it is the lyric poem *In Memoriam;* and it will include the largest part of the poetry of Wordsworth and Browning. The poems of Martin Tupper—as much undervalued now as they were overestimated at one time—are an obvious revival of Biblical wisdom. And the vitality of wisdom in modern literature was shown when the original genius of Walt Whitman began an entirely new departure, under new inspirations. There is, again, the whole literature of personality—a master-interest to modern thought—and this takes in various kinds of biography, lyrics, essays—alike essays in prose, and the verse essays of Pope or of Young's *Night Thoughts*. Satire, both ancient and modern, comes into the same category: though the satirist may attack individual personages or incidents, the appeal is always to the bearing of these on our conceptions of life. The vast literature which the modern world calls fiction has its affiliations with this science and art of human life: a later chapter[3] of this work will claim that fiction is simply the experimental side of the science of humanity. The popular magazine, though it may serve many

[1] Compare Matthew Arnold's Introduction to *Ward's English Poets* (Macmillan), page xix.

[2] A fuller treatment of this is given below, chapter xix.

[3] Chapter xviii, pages 342 ff.

purposes, yet obtains its vogue largely because it is the floating literature of current life.

The Fifth Book of the present work will deal more in detail with this special function of literature as the philosophy of life. Meanwhile, we may sum up the present chapter by remarking how the evolution we have been tracing reaches a culmination which is in correspondence with its starting-point. At the beginning of literature poetry includes science. As discussion becomes important enough to stand distinct from creation, the medium of prose is revealed. As discussion specializes, it throws off distinct sciences, with a medium of literary expression as different from other prose as prose is different from poetry. Finally, we reach a single special science which demands a universal medium of expression: in the criticism of LIFE poetry and prose are as one.

CHAPTER VII

EVOLUTION IN EPIC POETRY

Epic poetry, as the term is used in this work, covers the whole of creative literature that takes a narrative form, from Homer to the latest novel. The more limited conceptions of epic, that have hardly yet ceased to be orthodox, belong really to the critical confusion which, at the Renaissance, received works of Greek poets, not as revealing masterpieces, but as limiting definitions of literary types: the same spirit of criticism felt that Shakespeare's plays could not be dramas because they did not conform to the unities of Attic tragedy. We are not to mistake between one important type of epic poetry and epic poetry itself. Of course, the distinction is not to be ignored between narration in verse and narration in prose and a third mode of narration which, with William Morris,[1] alternates between prose and verse: but, whatever may be the value of this distinction, it cannot override the fundamental conception of epic as narrative creation.

If for a moment, before descending to particulars, we survey our epic poetry as a whole, four considerations stand prominently out.

1. The foundation of epic in our world literature is, of course, Homer: and from the morphological point of view the Homeric poems (we shall see) are the evolution of the organic epic out of floating epic material. This Homeric principle, if it may be so called, maintains itself as a leading interest of epic poetry through its whole course.

2. The Middle Ages—not to speak of the later ages of Greek literature—bring a vast amount of epic material, of all kinds and from all sources, and this follows largely the Homeric prin-

[1] In his *Roots of the Mountains, House of the Wolfings*, and other novels.

ciple of crystallization. Thus a second interest of literary evolution is to observe the aggregation of accumulating epic material into organic plot, and the types of plot form that thus arise.

3. Meanwhile, differentiation—the most elementary form taken by evolution—is at work here as everywhere: a third subject of interest is to watch, side by side with aggregation into organic plot, epic differentiation into free variety of types.

4. The later part of our world literature brings a new point of departure for epic poetry. It feels the influence of—or, if an astronomical phrase may be permitted, suffers perturbation from—the literature of prose. Prose, as the organ of discussion, has developed a literary medium of prose rhythm that can stand on equal terms with the medium of verse. And the progress of thought underlying all kinds of literature has tended to lay special emphasis upon the observation of human life. Thus we get the modern Epic of Life, in which the distinguishing accent is laid not on plot but on subject-matter, and which is free to express itself in verse or prose, with a tendency to prefer prose. In the morphological evolution of epic poetry the modern novel bulks as large at the end as Homer at the beginning.

I

Our first topic has to a large extent been anticipated in a previous chapter.[1] On page 134 the Evolution of the Organic Epic is summarized in tabular form (Chart XI). It involves the transition from the floating poetry of minstrel recitation, in a state of constant change, to the age of fixed or book poetry, that brings with it individual authorship. We begin with the

[1] Chapter i, pages 28–30. A fuller discussion of the matter of this first section, including plot analysis of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, will be found in chapter ii of *World Literature*.

CHART XI

Evolution of the Organic Epic

Floating (Oral) Poetry
(Minstrel Recitation)

Unit Stories

Story Fusion

Heroic Cycles (such as the Achilles Cycle, the Cycle of Thebes, the Robin Hood Cycle)—Such a cycle is not a poem but a state of poetry.

Fixed (Book) **Poetry**
(Individual Authorship)

THE ORGANIC EPIC: Amalgamation of many stories in a common plot (as in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*).

unit story; in the free variations of floating poetry we readily understand the fusion of many stories together. In time there arise certain heroic names, or other topics, which become centers around which there is an ever-increasing aggregation of stories; stories originally (it may be) told of other heroes, but now brought into association with a popular name. We get an Achilles cycle of warrior stories, an Odysseus cycle of wandering adventures, a cycle of Thebes; in a different field a Robin Hood cycle of outlaw life. Such an heroic cycle[1] is, of course, not a poem, but a state of things in poetry: a mass of incidents having no necessary connection with one another, yet attributed to a common hero. Then we pass over the boundary into the age of written literature and individual authorship: it becomes possible for an individual poet to take the indiscriminate incidents of the Achilles cycle and organize the whole into the harmonious plot of the *Iliad;* the same or a similar Homer organizes the Odysseus cycle into the harmonious plot of the *Odyssey.* The product is an Organic Epic: from the unit cell of the single story we have a development of complex literary organism with its parts in perfect co-ordination. All the generations of floating minstrelsy were required to accumulate the richness of material; until such material could pass through a single organizing mind no perfect co-ordination of plot could be possible. This architectonic work of co-ordinating traditional material into a harmony is of course poetic creation of the highest order. And what has enabled the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to supersede the epic poetry of their own times, and to remain dominant types for all ages, is just that which is expressed by the term Organic Epic: the conquest of abounding matter by perfect form, the amalgamation of many stories in a common harmony of plot.

It is interesting to compare the *Iliad* with the *Odyssey:* the latter seems to stand farther down the line of evolution

[1] Compare page 29, note 1.

we have been tracing, and the control of plot over matter has further advanced.

The plot of the *Iliad* can be simply formulated.

Plot of the Iliad

Main Story: Quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles: developed at length: within the
Enveloping Action: The Graeco-Trojan War: involving numerous Secondary Stories.

No language can be clearer or more emphatic than the opening lines of the *Iliad* which make its theme the wrath of Achilles—the famous quarrel between Achilles and Agamemnon. This theme is fully and harmoniously developed through the course of the poem, in a movement which exhibits the artistic effect of introversion—the latter half of the movement reversing the order of the first half.

Movement of the Iliad: Introversion

A. Origin: The Quarrel
B. First Day's War: The Rampart: Agamemnon's Repentance
C. Second Day's War: The Bivouac: Agamemnon's Apology Rejected

Interlude of Adventure: Nocturnal Spying

CC. Third Day's War: Achilles' bosom friend Patroclus Lost
BB. Return of Achilles: Patroclus Avenged and Hector Slain
AA. General Pacification: Burial of Patroclus and Hector

By a fine stroke of detail, the nocturnal spying expedition of the Tenth Book—the spirit of adventure relieving the main interest of war—separates the two halves of the movement. In the first half, the set of the action is wholly against Agamem-

non. The building of the rampart—token that the Greeks are driven to the defensive—brings Agamemnon to repentance; in the further stage, when the enemy bivouacs in the open air in expectation of a nocturnal flight of the Greeks, Agamemnon makes full surrender to Achilles and is rejected. Then the action turns. Though the Trojans have actually stormed the rampart, yet the loss in its defense of his bosom friend Patroclus is the nemesis of fate upon Achilles; in the next stage he fully surrenders his wrath, and avenges Patroclus by slaying Hector. The somber mourning of the final stage is the natural counterpart to the fierce quarrel of the opening book.

Nothing could be more perfect. Yet it is clear that we could eliminate three-quarters of the matter actually contained in the *Iliad* and still have sufficient for the working out of this main theme. The matter eliminated belongs to the Enveloping Action of the Trojan War. An enveloping action[1] is not the same thing as a story. It has no unity, no beginning or middle or end; the Trojan War has been in operation for years before the poem opens, and continues after the action has closed. The enveloping action is a state of things: in this case a highly complex state of things, combining many poetic motives. As main motive there is the overpowering interest of war: of war in all its aspects—clash of armies, individual struggles, alternations of advance and retreat. There is again the control of this war by what we should call overruling Providence—the personal control of Zeus as an incarnation of Destiny, whose balance of fate weighs events from time to time, and determines that they shall go exactly so far and no farther. We have moreover the strange poetic motive of sudden changes

[1] The matter of the enveloping action of the *Iliad* is fully analyzed in chapter ii of *World Literature:* see pages 116–34. (For enveloping action in drama compare *Shakespeare as Artist,* pages 361–65, and see Index under "Enveloping Action.")

from earth to the life of the gods in Olympus: scenes of divine life clearly used as a caricature of human life, and making the comic element in the *Iliad*.[1] At times we find, by way of relief, delightful pictures of home scenes on earth, or the grace of hospitality; with exquisite sketches of nature, chiefly in similes. The two interests of the main story and the enveloping action move side by side through the poem, inextricably interwoven: in mass, the enveloping action is far greater than the main story.

Secondary stories are added. These are separate stories related in the course of the poem: often they are narrated by the personages of the story; or, if part of the poet's narration, they are clearly independent stories, which could be cut out without the rest being affected. Every reader will remember the garrulous old age of Nestor and Phoenix, and the interminable tales they tell of old times. There are again pedigree stories: of warriors when they first appear, or pedigrees for the horses of Tros, the scepter of Agamemnon, and the like. As I read the poem, I reckon about eighty of such secondary stories; but no exact estimate can be made, since difference of opinion will often arise as to some bit of narrative, whether it is an independent story or a necessary detail. It is enough to say that secondary stories in the aggregate make a considerable element in the plot of the *Iliad*. And this is significant of the organic epic. Every one of these secondary stories may well have had independent existence in floating poetry; whether this be so or not, the large amount of such secondary matter in the *Iliad* illustrates the spirit of this type of poetry, and the tendency to sweep all available matter into the current of the plot.

It is different with the *Odyssey*:[2] what this yields to analysis is perhaps the most perfectly balanced plot in all poetry.

[1] Compare *World Literature*, pages 124–30.

[2] A fuller treatment of the *Odyssey* in *World Literature*, pages 134–47.

Plot of the Odyssey

Main Story: Odysseus and his Wanderings
- Complication: Wonders (nine episodes): swayed by Poseidon
- Resolution: Adventures (nine episodes): swayed by Athene

Underplot: of Domestic Life
- The Faithful Six (Wife—Son—Father—Nurse—Swineherd—Neatherd)
- The Hostile Three (Goatherd—Melantho and the Maids—Crowd of Suitors)

Secondary Satellite Stories
- Six Historic Feats of Odysseus (The Beggar—Strife with Ajax—The Wooden Horse—The Boar Scar—The Bow—The Bridal Bed)
- Three Parallels (Menelaus to Odysseus—Orestes to Telemachus—Theoclymenus to Telemachus)

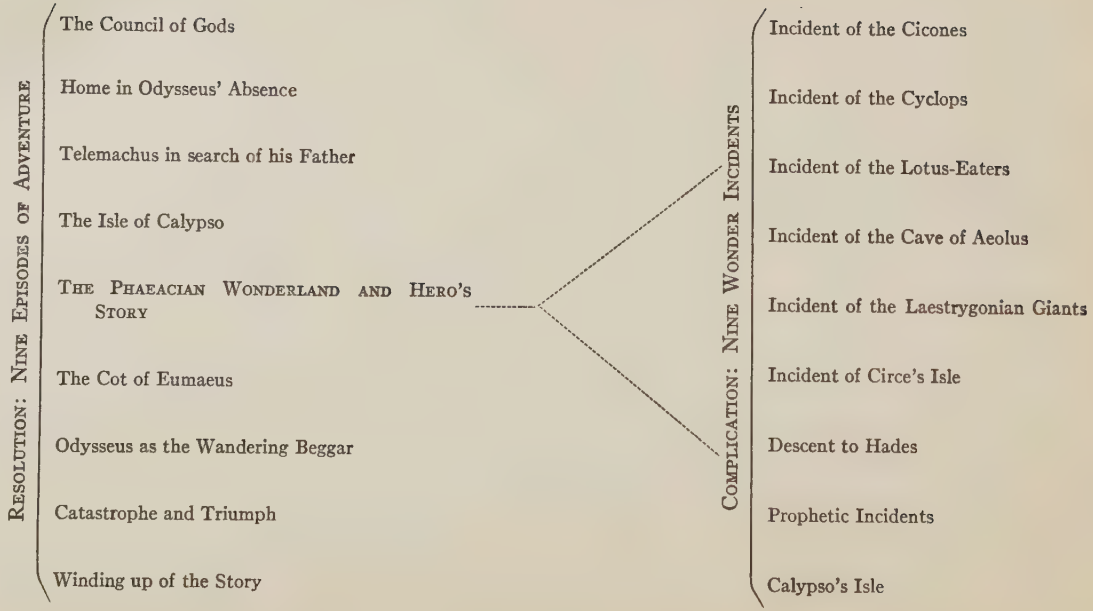
Faint Enveloping Action in the far background: The Trojan War

The Trojan War, instead of being an absorbing interest, lies in the far past: a faint enveloping action in the background, on which nevertheless the whole poem really rests. The main story is that of Odysseus and his wanderings, with its balanced 'complication and resolution.' The complicating train of circumstances takes Odysseus farther and farther away to the very ends of the earth; the resolving train of circumstances brings him safe back home. The complication is a series of wonder incidents tinged with the marvelous; the resolution, a series of incidents of adventure. Passages of the poem[1] distinctly state—what otherwise is clear enough— that the complicating half of the action is wholly swayed by the god Poseidon, the resolving half by the goddess Athene. When we follow the movement of the poem (see the scheme in Chart XII, page 140), we see that the whole of the direct action of the *Odyssey* is devoted to the resolution—the return of the hero. It falls into nine well-marked stages; the central one of the nine—

[1] Book XIII (lines 314, 341 of William Morris' translation).

CHART XII

Movement of the *Odyssey*


Resolution: Nine Episodes of Adventure
The Council of Gods
Home in Odysseus' Absence
Telemachus in search of his Father
The Isle of Calypso
The Phaeacian Wonderland and Hero's Story
The Cot of Eumaeus
Odysseus as the Wandering Beggar
Catastrophe and Triumph
Winding up of the Story
Complication: Nine Wonder Incidents
Incident of the Cicones
Incident of the Cyclops
Incident of the Lotus-Eaters
Incident of the Cave of Aeolus
Incident of the Laestrygonian Giants
Incident of Circe's Isle
Descent to Hades
Prophetic Incidents
Calypso's Isle

the visit to the Phaeacians—gives us Odysseus relating his story to his hosts, and in the indirect narration of this hero's story the whole complication of the action is contained. Its nine incidents are all wonder stories:[1] accordingly, the Phaeacian land in which we hear these marvels is itself pictured as a wonderland. The door of this Phaeacian wonderland is forever closed to the world when Poseidon, as a final token of hostility to Odysseus, turns the ship that rescued him into the rock that will block the Phaeacian harbor, so that they will ferry men back to the ordinary world no more.

To the main plot is attached an underplot: the domestic life of the hero's home. We have the faithful six and the hostile three: the significance of this statement is that each of the nine personages (or groups) is the center of a story, which could be taken out of the poem and stand alone. The story of each of the faithful six passes through the complicating trouble of Odysseus' absence and enters into the resolution and joy of the return; each of the other three has its period of insolent triumph followed by tragic nemesis.

The *Odyssey*, like the *Iliad*, has secondary stories, but with a difference. Instead of wholly miscellaneous matter, we have narrated in the course of the poem six historic feats of the hero—the story of Odysseus as a beggar, the strife with Ajax, the story of the wooden horse, of the boar hunt, of Odysseus' bow, of the bridal bed—all developed with epic particularity, and all assisting the main conception of Odysseus as the 'man of resource.' In addition to these, there are three independent phases of the general narration which present parallels to personages of the poem.[2] Menelaus is clearly made a minor counterpart of Odysseus: he announces himself as a man of wanderings; his detention in Egypt is made parallel to Odysseus' detention in Circe's isle; both Menelaus and Odysseus are to end their troubled lives in mystic regions of eternal peace. Much is made

[1] Compare *World Literature*, pages 141–47. [2] *Ibid.*, 137-38.

of Orestes: he has no natural connection with the action, but he is made a parallel to Telemachus, and it is by the model of Orestes avenging his father's fate that the son of Odysseus is roused to action. And Theoclymenus—otherwise a perfect stranger—first introduces himself to Telemachus as his counterpart; he is received into fellowship, and comes to have a share in the action of the poem. Thus the secondary stories of the *Odyssey* are all satellite stories, circling around some personage of the story as he moves through the action. The most extraneous matter is brought within control of the plot.

In the *Iliad*, then, the emphasis is on the copiousness of matter: only in the freedom of the enveloping action and the secondary stories can this be drawn within the plot. In the *Odyssey*, it is the plot itself that is the dominant interest, to which all the matter is made directly contributory. Let me, however, speak a word of caution against the misunderstanding so common in discussions of this kind: there is no suggestion of conscious plan or scheme on the part of the poet. Terms like 'purpose,' 'plan,' belong wholly to the process of analysis.[1] The poet, and the reader as he follows him, is conscious only of creative beauty and a sense of story form; it is when we apply analysis to this sense of form, as evidenced by the product, that we can trace plan and purpose. Purpose, in this sense, is purpose actually served by some element of the whole; plan is the analytic obverse of what is instinctively appreciated as symmetry. Such analysis applied to the poetry under consideration reveals the spirit of the organic epic as delight in the amalgamation of diverse stories in an harmonious plot. We are naturally struck with the contrast thus suggested between Greek epic and Greek drama. We can see that it was connection with the lyric chorus, and limitations of the primitive stage, that led Attic tragedy in the opposite direction of the most concentrated unity. The current of epic and of drama in our

[1] Compare below, pages 295–96, 402.

world literature has been in reverse directions. The organic epic of Homer has tended to yield to the modern short story; in tragedy, the movement has been from the unities of the Attic stage to the complex plots of Shakespeare.

II

The organic epic, of which the Homeric poems are such a conspicuous example, establishes itself as a stock form for all literature. Our next task is to note how wealth of epic material crystallizes into this poetic type, and the plot forms that thus arise.[1] For such a purpose there is no need to separate between Classical poetry, and the mass of Romantic literature introduced by the Middle Ages, and whatever other poetry may from various sources have been drawn into our world literature. On page 144 (Chart XIII) I have made a tabular digest of forms of plot such as arise out of the aggregation of epic material into organic epics.

The first of our plot forms may be called agglutination: a succession of independent stories unified by a common hero. Here the organic epic approaches nearest to the heroic cycle of floating poetry. In comparison with more elaborate modes of co-ordination, this agglutination almost suggests the segmented structure of certain lower animals, as a result of which they can be cut in two and yet the separate parts can live. An obvious illustration is Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. It is a note of epic story in the Bible[2] that each individual story is introduced into the historic framework at the point to which it belongs; but there are exceptions in the Samson and the Elisha stories, which are in continuous cycles. Where agglutination is the sole form, plot becomes identical with movement: the

[1] For this section in general compare below, Complex Plot, chapter xxiii, pages 398 ff.

[2] For this general subject compare chapter ix in my *Literary Study of the Bible* (and Appendix, pages 516–17).

CHART XIII

Aggregation of Epic Material into Organic Epics: Plot Forms

1. Agglutination succession of stories unified by a common hero		*Idylls of the King*—The Samson or Elisha stories of the Bible—*Ossian* *Aeneid*—*Kalevala*
2. Envelopment	Enveloping action	(Conspicuous in Scott, Dickens, and in the plays of Shakespeare) Trojan War for *Iliad, Odyssey, Aeneid* The Crusades for Scott's *Talisman, Betrothed, Ivanhoe* War of Charlemagne and the Moors for Ariosto's *Orlando*
	Common purpose	Ovid's *Metamorphoses*—the *Gesta Romanorum*
	Frame story	*Decameron—Canterbury Tales—Earthly Paradise*
3. Involution story sphered within story		*The Arabian Nights*
4. Episodic Expansion parts expanded and made an independent interest		*Paradise Lost—Aeneid—Argonautica—Lusiad*—Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*
5. Co-ordination multiplication of stories with mutual relation	Dependence Plot and underplot	*Odyssey*—Tasso's *Jerusalem—Don Quixote*
	Parallelism	*The Faerie Queene*
	General co-ordination	*Odyssey—Aeneid—Sigurd the Volsung*
6. Multiple Unity complete and independent epics interrelated in a higher and looser unity—as equivalent of a Grand Epic		Sir Walter Scott (verse and prose stories): Romantic epic Sienkiewicz: Polish romance Balzac: *Comédie humaine* Victor Hugo: *Tragédie humaine* Dumas: Epic of courtly adventure

unity of the component stories lies in their succession. But agglutination can combine with other forms of plot. Thus the plot of the *Aeneid*[1] is highly complex.

Main Action: Oracular Action of Roman Destiny working through the agency of Pious Aeneas
Complicating Action: Hostility of Juno
Resolving Action: Protection of Venus
Episodic Underplot of Love: Dido and Aeneas
Faint Enveloping Action in the Background: Trojan War

But the movement of the poem is markedly agglutinative.

First Half: Epic Action of Adventure: Exploring a Site for Rome: echoing the *Odyssey*
Second Half: Epic Action of War: Conflict of Turnus and Aeneas: echoing the *Iliad*

There is consciousness in the poem itself of this break in the action—a new invocation of the Muses as adventure gives place to the higher theme of war:

> A loftier task the bard essays:
> The horizon broadens on his gaze.

Envelopment is the second mode of story aggregation, and this takes several different forms. The enveloping action, already noted, is one of these. The Trojan War is enveloping action for the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*. The Crusades make enveloping action for three of the Waverley Novels: the *Talisman* is occupied with those who have gone on the crusade, the *Betrothed* and *Ivanhoe* with those who have remained at home. The war of Charlemagne against the Moors is the enveloping action in Ariosto's *Orlando*. In another form of envelopment the bond between the stories of a collection is made by their common purpose. One of the most brilliant epics of classical literature is Ovid's *Metamorphoses:* here we have

[1] Fully discussed in *World Literature*, pages 152–62.

drawn into a unity an immense number of stories that would have no connection with one another but for the single link that each is a story of metamorphosis. Another example is the most popular book of the Middle Ages, the *Gesta Romanorum*. This is the great epic of anecdote: a massing together of anecdotes that are as miscellaneous as miscellaneous can be. But a bond of connection is artificially forged for them in two ways. The title presents itself as a link: the regular recurrence of the phrase *in gestis Romanorum* gives the title a binding suggestiveness, as if the stories were so many parts of Roman history. The other link is the moralizing appended to each anecdote. The moral purpose does not inhere in the matter; its addition is a triumph of artificial ingenuity. To take an illustration which is in no way exceptional. We are told how St. Bernard riding through a forest meets a wicked gambler, who insists on the saint's gambling with him, the stakes being the saint's horse and the gambler's soul. The gambler's throw of the dice comes within one of the possible total; but the saint throws the total itself, and wins the gambler's soul. Here is story enough: but it is considered necessary to add a moral, the chief point of which is that the three dice symbolize the Holy Trinity! The stories are what they may be; but the common moral purpose is supposed to justify the whole collection.

To this head may be referred the frame story, which has been so marked a feature of epic poetry since the Renaissance: an initial story introducing the personages who will be the narrators of the stories that are to follow, these other stories being thus contained in the first story as a picture is contained in its frame. The frame story of the *Decameron* gives us the company of ladies and gentlemen fleeing from plague-stricken Florence to their country villas, where they are to pass the time in story-telling. In the introduction to Chaucer's masterpiece we have described for us the many-sorted pilgrims riding with mine host to Canterbury. The *Earthly Paradise* elaborates

the mystic story of the Wanderers who, in the evening of their ruined career, light upon a haven of peace in the stationary life of the Island: hosts and guests agree to meet twice in each month, in scenes of natural beauty, and thus exchange the tales they have gathered in their long experience. In this type, the link of story connection has itself become a story; the frame story will often be the most elaborate and impressive of the whole collection.

It seems only a step from this to involution, a third type of story linking: here each story of a series may be a frame for those that follow, story being sphered within story to any degree of complexity. This seems to be specially a characteristic of oriental epic; we are familiar with it in *The Arabian Nights Entertainment.* How complex and yet beautiful this mode of epic connection may be made, is best seen in illustrations: I subjoin a plot scheme from *The Arabian Nights.*[1]

Frame Story of Scheherezade
- Story of the Hunchback, and the Four inplicated in his death
  - Story (1) of the Christian Merchant—containing
    - Story of the Handless Man
  - Story (2) of the Mussulman Purveyor—containing
    - Story of the Thumbless Man
  - Story (3) of the Jewish Physician—containing
    - Story of the Mutilated Patient
  - Story (4) of the Tailor—containing
    - Story of the Lame Guest
    - Story of the Chattering Barber
      - Of the Barber's first brother (hunchback)
      - Of the Barber's second brother (toothless)
      - Of the Barber's third brother (blind)
      - Of the Barber's fourth brother (one-eyed)
      - Of the Barber's fifth brother (no ears)
      - Of the Barber's sixth brother (harelipped)
    - Story of the Barber concluded
  - Story of the Tailor concluded
- Story of the Hunchback concluded

Frame Story resumed

[1] More fully discussed in *World Literature*, pages 307–10.

Here we have story involution carried to the fifth degree of remoteness from the starting-point—story within story within story within story within the frame story: all the dropped links are exactly picked up. As additional effect, the successive items have added to them whimsical points of anatomical correspondence. And this *tour de force* of structural ingenuity is an undercurrent of interest to what on the surface is a boisterous profusion of comic perplexity and adventure.

A fourth type of plot may be termed episodic expansion: the general movement of the poem is simple, but particular parts of the movement are expanded until they become an independent interest. A typical case is the *Paradise Lost.* Its opening lines—as clearly as the opening of the *Iliad*—state the theme of the poem, man's fall and redemption, and the theme is developed regularly to the conclusion. But what are really details of the whole movement—the War in Heaven and Fall of the Angels, the Creation of the World and Man, Adam's Life in Paradise before the Visit of the Warning Angel—these are elaborated into sustained stories that are poems in themselves. At the close of the action, the working of the scheme of redemption through the course of human history—necessarily outside the unity of time—is disclosed in vision, and this stands as a final episode. Similarly, in the *Aeneid* the love of Dido and Aeneas makes an episode, during which the movement of the poem stands still, as its opposing forces, Juno and Venus, have for the moment become united. The *Argonautica,*[1] from the nature of the subject, is a succession of adventurous incidents: several of these incidents seem expanded into episodes, such as the incident of the Lemnian Women, of Phineus, above all the Love of Jason and Medea. In this connection also we may note the *Lusiad* of Camoens. This great Portuguese epic has a simple movement—the adventurous voyage of Vasco di Gama:

[1] Translated by A. S. Way in the Temple Classics (Dent).

one detail of the return voyage is elaborated into the independent episode of the Joyous Life in the Isle of Venus.[1]

We come to co-ordination in a more general sense: the multiplication of stories with mutual relation. Such general co-ordination has already appeared in the schemes of plot offered for the *Odyssey* and *Aeneid*. One phase of co-ordination is the interdependence of plot and underplot. *Don Quixote* furnishes a simple example: the chief structural interest of this epic lies in the juxtaposition throughout of Don Quixote and his squire Sancho Panza; we have the interwoven threads of chivalrous sentiment gone mad in the master and farcical common-sense in the man. An elaborate illustration of the same form is the beautiful plot of Tasso's *Jerusalem*.

Plot of Tasso's Jerusalem

Main Action: War of the Crusaders against Jerusalem and its allies of Egypt and Persia

Underplots:

1. Attached to Rinaldo: Armida, the interest of love-intrigue and enchantment
2. Attached to Tancred: Double Underplot:
   - Clarinda, interest of love and the female warrior
   - Ermina, chivalrous love

To all the other complexity of this plot is added a further touch of complexity, when the two sides of the double underplot become intertwined through the device of Ermina assuming the armor of Clarinda, and the confusion that this necessarily develops. Yet another phase of co-ordination is presented by

[1] This poem, it may be remarked, at all points echoes classical form. It opens, according to Horace's canon, in the middle of affairs, while the earlier phase of the action is given in the hero's story—Vasco's narration to his host the King of Melind that fills cantos III to V. The supernatural machinery of Bacchus and Venus, opposing and protecting deity, echoes the Juno and Venus of the *Aeneid* and the Poseidon and Athene of the *Odyssey*. Velloso's story in the sixth canto stands as a secondary story.

the parallelism of plot that is such a striking feature of the *Faerie Queene.* Each of its six books is devoted to celebration of a separate virtue: the allegorical development of each virtue is carried forward with a regularity of structure that only Spenser's genius could keep from becoming mechanical.[1]

But our review of the plot forms arising out of the aggregation of epic material into organic epics must be carried a step farther. This organic epic, itself a harmony of stories, can enter into a higher and more complex unity. The first conspicuous example of this is found in the work of Sir Walter Scott. A new interest is given to this if we read Scott's stories—alike the Waverley Novels and the verse poems—in order: not order of composition—which would only be a matter of biography—but in the order of the phases of life they represent. We thus get a great epic of romantic life: extending from the Crusades of the tenth century to the fashionable life of the nineteenth; the field stretching from the Constantinople of *Count Robert* to the Orkney and Shetland of the *Pirate;* the romance clothing itself in the most varied national dresses, and taking on special forms as it plunges into particular historic struggles or political ferments. Of course, each single work is an organic epic complete and independent; most of the Waverley Novels will analyze into a plot scheme as complex as that of the *Odyssey.* But the whole gives us the epic of multiple unity: complete and independent epics interrelated in what is a higher, if looser, unity. What applies to Scott applies to his nearest counterpart: we have a multiple epic in the Polish romance of Sienkiewicz, the great trilogy of *With Fire and Sword, The Deluge, Pan-Michael.* Novels of Alexander Dumas will aggregate into an epic of courtly adventure. In the case of Balzac, the coalescence

[1] It is a tradition of criticism to make light of the matter and structure of this poem. To myself it appears one of the most perfect pieces of plot architecture in all literature. I hope some day to develop this idea in a separate work.

of his numerous novels into a unity is present to the consciousness of the author; he conceives his life work as a *Comédie humaine*—a catholic epitome of purely human life in contrast with the *Divine Comedy* of Dante. A similar consciousness may be seen in Victor Hugo: while I am not aware that he has used the phrase *Tragédie humaine*, yet this seems the underlying idea of his preface to his *Toilers of the Sea.*

> Religion, Society, and Nature,—these are the three struggles of man. These three struggles are his three needs. He has need of a faith, hence the Temple; he must create, hence the city; he must live, hence the plough and the ship. But these three solutions comprise three conflicts. The mysterious difficulty of life results from all three. Man strives with obstacles under the form of superstition, under the form of prejudice, and under the form of the elements. A triple ἀνάγκη (fate) weighs upon us,—the ἀνάγκη of dogmas, the ἀνάγκη of laws, the ἀνάγκη of things. In "Notre Dame de Paris" the author denounced the first; in "Les Miserables" he exemplified the second; in this book he indicates the third. With these three fatalities which environ man mingles that inward fatality, the supreme ἀνάγκη, the human heart.

It is a symptom of such correlation that some of these writers introduce particular personages in more than one novel; a notable case is the Zagloba who unifies the great trilogy of Sienkiewicz; he is the one creative figure who stands comparison with Shakespeare's Falstaff. This practice seems to be extending in modern fiction: it was a leading interest in the novels of Anthony Trollope, and it appears markedly in the work of Mr. Arnold Bennett, happily still incomplete.

It seems to me that we do not get the full literary value out of the type of literature of which I am speaking unless we recognize this multiple unity, drawing together independent epics into a looser epic whole. It is natural to speak of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* as a Grand Epic: the 'Grand' denoting—not high excellence, however true that would be—but grandeur

of scope. A whole civilization seems to be crystallized in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But the life of the Homeric age is simple: our modern intricate and complex civilization would be dwarfed if compelled into the limits of a single novel, however elaborate. The freer unity of the multiple epic makes a medium elastic enough to fit the matter. And the sense of story form is satisfied by the combination between the perfect crystallization of plot in the component epics and the freer aggregation that draws them into a whole.

III

The third of our four features of epic morphology is so largely a matter of course that it needs only the briefest mention. Wherever there is vitality in literature there will be differentiation—the continued appearance of new and varied types. Besides the organic epic, as a generic term, we have already noted the grand epic. To this may be added the classical epic, such as William Morris's *Life and Death of Jason*, the note of which is the interest of retelling the stories already so familiar. Some narratives introduce themselves by the negative title of a 'tale.' The anecdote is the epic unit: its beauty will lie in reducing the narration to the lowest possible terms. We have heroic stories, stories of adventure, mischief stories or picaresque novels, love stories, mystic stories. Innumerable other *genres* are to be found, and the number of them will continue to multiply; their classification belongs to literary history, and different principles of classification will appear with different historians and the special points of view from which they may write.

Yet something of the nature of a climax to epic differentiation may be seen in the Short Story which is so typical of the present day. Professor Brander Matthews,[1] and others who diagnose this particular form of literature, are careful to point

[1] *The Short Story* (American Book Company).

out that the Short Story is not constituted simply by absence of length. In contrast with novelettes, fabliaux, and other negatively brief narrations, the Short Story is positively characterized by "unity, totality, and concentration on a single effect or sequence of effects." Mr. Matthews, by way of contrast, cites an interesting passage from the writings of Washington Irving:

> I consider a story merely as a frame on which to stretch the materials; it is the play of thought, and sentiment, and language, the weaving in of characters, lightly, yet expressively delineated; the familiar and faithful exhibition of scenes in common life; and the half-concealed vein of humor that is often playing through the whole, —these are among what I aim at, and upon which I felicitate myself in proportion as I think I succeed.

In direct antithesis to this, the Short Story is made by "the essential compression, the swift and straightforward movement, the unwillingness to linger by the way." It is in the literature of France and the United States that the impulse to this type of story is most observable, and perhaps Poe and Maupassant may be considered its great masters. Morphologically considered, the Short Story seems a goal toward which epic differentiation has been moving: we have here got down to the epic unit—not the bare unit of the anecdote, but the epic unit artistically emphasized in substitution for the elaboration of other forms.

IV

We have yet to deal with the new departure in epic poetry which belongs specially to the modern world. Literature in its first beginnings was all poetry: as time has gone on the balance of power has moved steadily in the direction of prose. This does not mean that creative force in literature has diminished, but that it is less conspicuous; the energies of modern thought are divided between creation and discussion, and discussion is the predominant partner. Originally the only medium of expression was verse; the rise of history and philosophy

and oratory developed the rhythmic medium of prose. What exactly is the difference between verse and prose may be a complex question, but it is safe to say that prose is a freer medium than verse. Both prose and verse are at the service of modern creative thought. When once we escape the confusion[1] arising out of the two meanings of the word 'prose,' then it is easy to see that our novels simply exhibit epic poetry using its freedom to express itself in a medium of wider range. Nor is it simply a question of the medium of expression. All epic pictures life: but, in comparison with the simple life of antiquity, modern life is infinitely complex in its significance and its variety. All that ancient epic possessed in sheer creative power and elaboration of plot is open to the modern story-teller; but it is not surprising that in modern narrative literature the characterizing quality should be one of subject-matter rather than form. Modern novels collectively constitute the epic of life: a literary type which draws to itself our greatest creative thinking, and is as truly distinctive of the present time as Romantic drama was distinctive of the Elizabethan age or Homeric poetry of primitive Greece.

Four distinct currents of literary influence seem to have combined in developing the modern novel as the epic of life. Chart XIV on page 155 suggests the connection of these with the evolution of the novel.

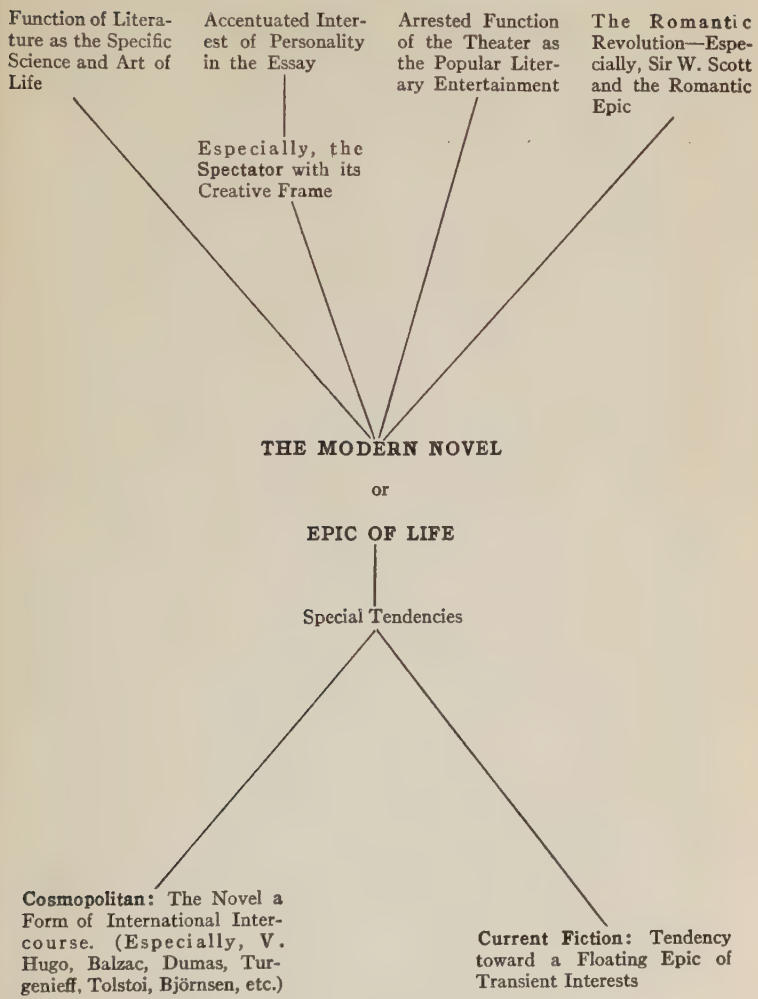
The first of these has been anticipated in the previous chapters.[2] With advance of thought comes specialization, and the rise of particular arts and sciences, each with its clearly defined province and technical phraseology. All this simply emphasizes the function of general literature as the specific art and science of life—of human life in that wholeness of view that revolts from specialization. Creative literature has its full share in this function.

[1] Compare above, chapter i, pages 13 ff.

[2] Pages 127–31; compare below, chapter xix.

CHART XIV

Evolution of Epić in Modern Literature


Function of Literature as the Specific Science and Art of Life
Accentuated Interest of Personality in the Essay
Especially, the Spectator with its Creative Frame
Arrested Function of the Theater as the Popular Literary Entertainment
The Romantic Revolution—Especially, Sir W. Scott and the Romantic Epic
THE MODERN NOVEL
or
EPIC OF LIFE
Special Tendencies
Cosmopolitan: The Novel a Form of International Intercourse. (Especially, V. Hugo, Balzac, Dumas, Turgenieff, Tolstoi, Björnsen, etc.)
Current Fiction: Tendency toward a Floating Epic of Transient Interests

In the second place, it is interesting to watch the part played by the essay in the evolution of the novel. I have elsewhere dealt at some length with the evolution of the essay.[1] In the wisdom literature of Scripture, notably in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, we can watch in all its stages development from floating proverbs, through the proverb cluster, to the polished literary essay. The tradition of Ecclesiasticus is taken up in modern literature by Bacon: and here we have the supreme master of this literary type. The essay stands fully revealed as the organ of the miscellaneous; we see as its characteristics the fragmentariness and freedom of its treatment, and also how it reveals a personal attitude toward questions of life. But so far the personality reflected is the personality of the author. As we proceed, two forces are brought to play upon the developing essay. With Plutarch—who becomes a European classic—we have the great interest of comparative personality. The essay enlarges to the treatment of individuality in general; we have the delicious character types of the *Microcosmography*, the analysis of what the Elizabethan stage called 'humors.' A second force is the wide influence of Montaigne. This gives further accentuation to the essay as reflecting the author's personality; mere flashes of momentary thinking find a literary organ of expression. The critical point in the development of the essay is the *Spectator*. Here the essays of a great master associate themselves with two other literary characteristics. The *Spectator* appears from day to day: here begins the line of change which more and more draws the great mass of essay writing into the periodical medium of the magazine and newspaper. More than this, the essays of Addison were made to rest upon something which resembles the frame story of fiction: there is the slight story of the Spectator's Club, with the delicate character-sketching of the Spectator himself and the fellow-

[1] *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 298–306. With this paragraph as a whole compare chapter viii of *World Literature*, pages 381–401.

members of his Club. In such creative framework we have a direct link between the essay and the novel: the modern novel, in many types of it, appears as the fusion of essay with story. Perhaps this is seen most clearly in the novels of George Eliot. The woman who wrote under that name had a profound grasp of human life, and a felicity of epigrammatic expression, such as might have made her a second Bacon for the essay. But she also had a power that Bacon wholly lacked—the power of creative story. In her works we can see side by side, in equal combination, the element of essay and the element of story: instead of a miscellaneous series of essays on human life, the essay-like reflection is brought into close contact with successive points of the creative picture. Creative literature and discussional literature thus enter upon equal terms into the modern epic of life.

A third current of historic influence on the novel comes from the drama. The theater has one great advantage over other literature of human life in its direct appeal to a present audience: the Latin for 'stage' is 'pulpit.' In the Elizabethan age the Romantic drama of Shakespeare was the leading literary organ for the treatment of life. Then came the Puritan schism: the serious and earnest half of the nation tabooed the theater, and left the drama to sink to the lowest point of frivolity and evil. Later on, the arrested function of the theater to handle questions of human life was taken up by the rising novel. Those who in English literature trace the early differentiation of the modern novel from other novels which—as the poor of literature—we have always with us, agree in indicating, as primary points of departure, *Robinson Crusoe* and the works of Richardson. This *Robinson Crusoe*, in superficial appearance a story of adventure, resembles in its general appeal a drama of situation: the situation of a solitary soul cut off from communion with his kind, having to learn all by himself the first steps of elementary civilization, and fight his spiritual struggles

alone. Richardson throws his whole work into the form of letters exchanged between the personages of the story: there is no narration, and the author never speaks. But this exchange of letters is presentation as distinguished from epic description; it is merely an extension of dramatic dialogue. Such dramatic characteristics, impressed upon the new form at its start, have leavened it with dramatic spirit in its maturity. In our novels description of incident does much: yet the most emphatic points of the action are likely to come to us in what seems close to the dialogue of the stage. A specific illustration may be in point. A leading effect in *Daniel Deronda* is the first meeting of the hero and the heroine. The ambitious society girl has at last been introduced, at an archery meeting, to the supreme aristocrat of the neighborhood. The shock of first meeting is described, and then dialogue sets in.

"I used to think archery was a great bore," Grandcourt began. He spoke with a fine accent, but with a certain broken drawl, as of a distinguished personage with a distinguished cold on his chest.

"Are you converted to-day?" said Gwendolen.

(Pause, during which she imagined various degrees and modes of opinion about herself that might be entertained by Grandcourt.)

"Yes, since I saw you shooting. In things of this sort one generally sees people missing and simpering."

"I suppose you are a first-rate shot with a rifle."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen, having taken a rapid observation of Grandcourt, made a brief graphic description of him to an indefinite hearer.)

"I have left off shooting."

"Oh, then, you are a formidable person. People who have done things once and left them off make one feel very contemptible, as if one were using cast-off fashions. I hope you have not left off all follies, because I practice a great many."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen made several interpretations of her own speech.)

"What do you call follies?"

"Well, in general, I think whatever is agreeable is called a folly. But you have not left off hunting, I hear."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen recalled what she had heard about Grandcourt's position, and decided that he was the most aristocratic-looking man she had ever seen.)

"One must do something."

"And do you care about the turf?—or is that among the things you have left off?"

(Pause, during which Gwendolen thought that a man of extremely calm, cold manners might be less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not likely to interfere with his wife's preferences.)

"I run a horse now and then; but I do not go in for the thing as some men do. Are you fond of horses?"

"Yes, indeed: I never like my life so well as when I am on horseback, having a great gallop. I think of nothing. I only feel myself strong and happy."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen wondered whether Grandcourt would like what she said, but assured herself that she was not going to disguise her tastes.)

Now, all this is stage dialogue, and stage dialogue intensified: as if the presentative function of stage directions were being enlarged to cover unspoken thoughts and feelings. Dramatic presentation, then, unites with the discussional power of the essay to widen the literary range for this modern epic of life.

We must not, among formative influences for the modern novel, pass over the Romantic revolution of the eighteenth century, especially after the leadership of this revolution had passed into the hands of Sir Walter Scott. The Romantic epic may be a distinct type, but it is one closely related to the epic of life. It had brought epic poetry once more to the front rank of literature; it had also vindicated the claims of prose to an equality, if not more than an equality, with verse as a medium for narrative creation.

Under such widening influences as these has been developed the modern novel, as the great contribution of our own age to

the epic poetry of the world. It takes the position in the fulness of our world literature that was occupied by the organic epic in earlier stages. Many of these novels are themselves organic epics. To take the first illustration that occurs: the plot scheme of *Middlemarch* obviously includes a number of independent stories. We have Dorothea and the tangled threads of her life; Celia and a picture of stationary bliss; Fred Vincy developed out of his rawness by force of attraction to a girl of simple good sense; Lydgate with his professional ambition wrecked by a shallow-hearted wife; Bulstrode and his spiritual tragedy. Each of these can be abstracted, as a separate story, with full plot and human interest: in the novel they are intertwined by accidental links, and all merged in Middlemarch provincial society, with its characteristic provincial humors, and a faint suggestion of the struggle of the Reform Bill for enveloping action. But the accent is no longer laid upon interest of plot; it is the subject-matter which stands out, and makes the novel the epic of human life.

Two special tendencies of the modern novel are worth noting as we conclude this part of our subject. One is the tendency of the novel to become cosmopolitan in its interest. In this form more than in any other we draw into our English world literature from abroad. The great English masters are not more to us than Victor Hugo, Balzac, Dumas, Turgenieff, Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky, Daudet, Björnsen. The different peoples of Europe read one another's novels, if they read nothing else that is foreign. Novel-reading tends to become a form of international intercourse.

A second tendency is suggested by the term 'current fiction.' We are constantly hearing this phrase, and are continually having thrust upon us astonishing statistics of circulating libraries and 'best sellers.' It is often made a reproach against particular novelists, whose literary skill is not disputed, that they hanker after a certain set of social problems, or cater to

certain tastes and fancies, simply because these have popularity at the moment; and it is freely prophesied that such novels as these will not live. The prophecy may prove true in fact: but all this complaint seems a misreading of a literary phenomenon. The point to which current fiction testifies is, not deficiency in the literature, but elasticity of the medium. It is part of the vitality of fiction as a literary form that it tends to become a floating literature of transient human interests. We have seen the natural progression of literature toward floating in the sense of periodical literature; we are not to limit this idea of 'floating' by regular recurrence such as weekly or monthly. In all ages there are types of literature that deal with matters of temporary prominence, and so have a literary existence that flames up and dies away. Our party newspapers of the present time were preceded by party pamphleteering and this by party controversies in ponderous Latin folios. The novelist who can diagnose the social problem of the moment need not complain if his work shares the fate of *Smectymnuus* and *Areopagitica*. Epic poetry began for our world literature in spontaneous rhapsodizings of today's achievements at tonight's supper. It reaches a natural goal in a floating literature of current fiction, that can bring the highest creative skill to give us kodak pictures of each folly, or piece of social wisdom, as it flies.

CHAPTER VIII

EVOLUTION IN DRAMA

It may be well, following the course taken in the previous chapter, to make a comprehensive survey of the whole dramatic field in our world literature before dealing in detail with particular parts.

1. Analogous to the position of Homer in epic poetry is the position held in our drama by Attic tragedy and comedy. This is remarkable, because, while Homer represents a natural course of evolution, Greek drama is a highly specialized type, the product of particular circumstances and disturbing influences in the evolution of literature. Yet, so great is the genius of the four poets—Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes—and so firm is the position of Greek as ancestral literature, that the Classical drama has maintained a powerful influence through nearly the whole of our literary history, and its masterpieces have hardly been surpassed even by the plays of Shakespeare.

2. With the passage to the Middle Ages drama undergoes a long eclipse. The Classical dramas are locked up in the monasteries, accessible only to the clergy, and to few of these. For the general public—a cultured, but not a reading class—the theater gives place to the minstrel, and epic poetry becomes the main literary interest.

3. At the same time a new evolution of drama from first beginnings takes place, this mediaeval drama being developed out of Christian worship as Greek drama had been developed out of the worship of Bacchus. It progresses through several interesting dramatic types, until it seems on the verge of becoming a fully developed poetic literature, when this dramatic dawn is swallowed up in the full sunrise of the Renaissance.

4. The revival of Classical drama that comes with the Renaissance operates in two ways. The more immediate effect is that the recovered sense of dramatic form is brought to bear upon the mediaeval accumulation of romantic material: by this marriage of epic and drama we get the Romantic Drama of Shakespeare, the highest point to which the drama of our world literature has ever attained or is likely to attain.

5. Later on, and mainly by influence of French literature, there is a more direct revival of Classical drama by conscious imitation: this Modern Classical drama has for its great masters Racine and Molière.

6. The differentiation of varied dramatic types has, naturally, been in evidence throughout our history: at last differentiation comes to have free course as the Classical and Romantic types lose their paramount position. In modern times no drama is placed at an advantage or a disadvantage by its admitting the influences we call Romantic and Classical.

I

We have to consider first the evolution of Classical drama. In this portion of the literary field, more perhaps than elsewhere, evolutionary processes in literature are clearly revealed: the unfolding of stages, the disturbing forces, the traces of transition steps in the fully developed product. In a separate work[1] I have dealt at full length with this subject. Here we can note only prominent points in the whole process of evolution; and these are suggested in tabular form on page 166.

It is well that the reader should have in his mind a clear conception of the ballad dance, the starting-point of all these changes. I cite from my work already mentioned[2] a specimen ballad dance; it is, of course, an imaginary reconstruction,

[1] *The Ancient Classical Drama: A Study in Literary Evolution* (Oxford University Press).

[2] *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 18–20; compare pages 20–22.

nothing else being possible, but it at least offers something objective on which the imagination can work. The theme is the story of Lycurgus, one of the many stories of mortal resistance to the introduction of Bacchic worship, and the tragic results this brings. Nothing of the nature of a theater must be supposed; only a level orchestra, and a band of performers habited as Satyrs, who bring out the story somewhat in this way:

With the solemn rhythm and stately gestures of choral ritual they lead off to the praise of Bacchus. They sing his glorious birth from love and the lightning flash, his triumphant career through the world to establish his worship, before which all resistance went down, as Pentheus driven mad might testify, or Damascus flayed alive. With awe they meditate on the terrible thought of mortals resisting the gods, most terrible of all when the resistance seems to be successful! So it was with Lycurgus:—and the music quickens and the gestures become animated as the Chorus describe a strange portent, a god fleeing before a mortal man! In ever increasing crescendo they depict the scene, and how the mortal gains on the god; till at last the agitation becomes uncontrollable, and the Chorus break into two Semichoruses which toss from side to side of the orchestra the rapid dialogue:—What path is this he has taken?—Is it the path to the precipice?—Can a god be other than omniscient?—Can a mortal prevail against a deity?—So the dance whirls on to a climax as the fugitive is pictured leaping from the precipice into the sea below. The Semichoruses close into a circle again, and with the smoothest rhythms and most flowing gestures the Chorus fancy the waves parting to receive the god, softly lapping him round as a garment, and gently conveying him down to the deep; there the long train of Nereids meets him, and leads him in festal procession to the palaces of the sea: you can almost catch the sound of muffled revelry from the clear, cool, green depths. The music takes a sterner tone as the Chorus go on to the thought that a god's power can act though he be absent; and in minor cadences, and ever drearier and drearier gestures, they paint a land smitten with barrenness,—no clouds to break the blinding heat, vegetation drooping, and men's hearts hardening. The dance quickens again as the theme changes to Lycurgus' futile

rage: friends interpose, but he turns his anger on them; clear omens are given, but he reads them amiss. More and more rapid become the evolutions, until in thrilling movements is painted the on-coming madness; and when, in the midst of his mad fit, they realise Lycurgus meeting his son, again the agitation of the Chorus become uncontrollable, and a second time they break into semichoric dialogue:—What means the drawn sword?—What the wild talk of hewing down the vines of Bacchus?—Is it his son that he mistakes for a vine?—Ah, too late!—The dance subsides with the calmness that comes on the king when he awakes too late to his deed; and from this calmness it quickens to a final climax as it suggests the people inflamed by the god, the crowd of Bacchanals pouring in, the cries for vengeance on the king, the tearing by wild horses. Then, returning to their first strains, the Chorus repeat their reverence for the gods, whose might is irresistible.

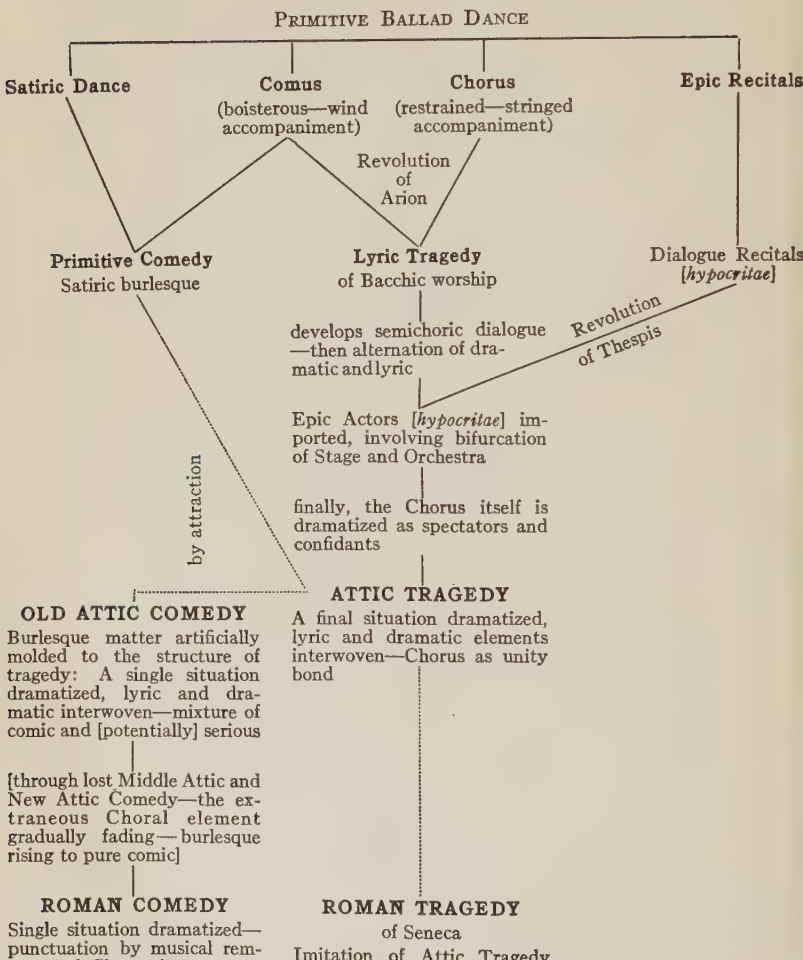
It will be seen that in such a ballad dance the story of Lycurgus is neither acted nor narrated: we have neither drama nor epic. All is well within the wandering meditation of lyric poetry, which (we have seen[1]) can at any point dip into narrative or dramatic presentation.

In primitive Greece such ballad dances give spontaneous expression to every form of activity—worship, sport, military exercise, social amenities. We need—as a glance at Chart XV (page 166) suggests—to fasten our attention upon two contrasting types of ballad dance: the Chorus and the Comus. The Comus is boisterous in its mirth; it has the minimum of form—merely a joining of hands and rhythmic saunter around a whole country side. The Chorus is an example of restrained art: its evolutions are confined to an orchestra, and it favors the form of strophes answered by antistrophes. The fundamental division in music between wind and strings applies here: the Comus is accompanied with the flute, the Chorus has the stringed accompaniment of the lyre. These two contrasting

[1] Above, page 44.

CHART XV

Evolution of Classical Drama


PRIMITIVE BALLAD DANCE
Satiric Dance
Comus
(boisterous—wind accompaniment)
Chorus
(restrained—stringed accompaniment)
Epic Recitals
Revolution of Arion
Primitive Comedy
Satiric burlesque
Lyric Tragedy
of Bacchic worship
Dialogue Recitals [hypocritae]
develops semichoric dialogue —then alternation of dramatic and lyric
Revolution of Thespis
Epic Actors [hypocritae] imported, involving bifurcation of Stage and Orchestra
finally, the Chorus itself is dramatized as spectators and confidants
by attraction
OLD ATTIC COMEDY
Burlesque matter artificially molded to the structure of tragedy: A single situation dramatized, lyric and dramatic interwoven—mixture of comic and [potentially] serious
ATTIC TRAGEDY
A final situation dramatized, lyric and dramatic elements interwoven—Chorus as unity bond
[through lost Middle Attic and New Attic Comedy—the extraneous Choral element gradually fading—burlesque rising to pure comic]
ROMAN COMEDY
Single situation dramatized—punctuation by musical remnants of Chorus into succession of Acts—comic, with serious moralizings and burlesque relief
ROMAN TRAGEDY
of Seneca
Imitation of Attic Tragedy dissociated from the stage—the component elements rhetorically accentuated

types of ballad dance were brought together by the Revolution of Arion (B.C. 600). He is said to have "made the dithyramb choral": the dithyramb—or boisterous dance belonging to the worship of Bacchus—he turned into a Chorus. This gives us the "lyric tragedy" which is the earliest tragic form: the word *tragedy* is *song of Tragi*, that is, of Satyrs, followers of Bacchus. When the most exuberant matter is forced into the most restrained of art forms, there are sure to ensue novel developments; in the succession of these modifications of the choral dithyramb is the path of literary tragedy. The imaginary illustration of a ballad dance given above applies to the choral dithyramb after it has taken the first of its forward developments. At two points the Chorus was made to express extreme excitement by breaking up into Semichoruses which exchanged rapid dialogue: by this natural step dialogue has been brought into lyric tragedy, and dialogue is the essence of drama. Such use of semichoric dialogue as a vent for excitement appears constantly in fully developed Greek tragedy. Once introduced, the element of dialogue in lyric tragedy rapidly extends, until the whole presents the alternation of dramatic episodes and choral odes which is the final form of Classical tragedy.

The next step in the process of development comes by external influence, and we have the Revolution of Thespis. Epic poetry had arisen out of the ballad dance, and soon dropped the musical accompaniment and dance movements. It made an approach toward drama by its device of dialogue recitals: where the matter admitted of it, an assistant joined the principal reciter—say, in description of a quarrel—and the alternate speeches of the two reciters had an effect resembling dialogue. The Revolution of Thespis (B.C. 535) imported these epic reciters into the developing tragedy, for the purpose of performing the dramatic dialogue which before had been a minor function of the Chorus. An interesting trace of this stage is seen in the word *hypocrites*, which etymologically applies to the assistant

reciter of epic poetry, but which is the regular Greek term for a dramatic actor, and in this way has contributed a metaphor to the English language—the idea of a 'hypocrite' as a man who acts a part. This revolutionary step involves the bifurcation of stage and orchestra, the first for the actors, the second for the Chorus. Further development takes place in the separate expansion of the dramatic and lyric elements of tragedy; the stage (for example) soon evolving scenery and accessories. The final step in the evolution is not noted by historians, but is implied in the final product. Up to this point the 'Chorus' has been a band of worshipers at the Bacchic feast who *performed* the tragedy. But at last the Chorus are themselves drawn into the dramatic story in the capacity of imaginary spectators or confidants. When the very performers of the lyric tragedy are themselves dramatized, tragedy has become wholly drama.[1]

This Attic tragedy, the medium of the three great masters, stands among the species of world drama as choral tragedy.[2] It presents the regular alternation of dramatic episodes on the stage and lyric odes in the orchestra. The dramatic and lyric elements are closely interwoven. The choral influence invades the dramatic episodes in what are known technically as 'stage lyrics'—the 'monody,' or lyric speech of an actor, and 'concerto,'[3] lyric dialogue between actors and Chorus. This is not merely a distinction of meter: when it is remembered that what appears in lyric meters was always sung in the performance, while the rest was merely spoken, it will be seen that such choral tragedy had the combined range of drama and opera, with the power at any moment of breaking from verse to music and returning from music to spoken verse. It emphasized for

[1] The evolution of Greek tragedy is more fully treated in my *Ancient Classical Drama*, chapter i.

[2] Compare *Ancient Classical Drama*, chapters ii–iii, for a fuller exposition of choral tragedy, with illustrations.

[3] The Greek word is *kommos*.

subsequent poetry the device of metrical fluctuations for the expression of fluctuating emotions;[1] until Shakespearean drama carries this a stage farther in variations between verse and prose. The Chorus was the unity bond of the whole poem. As spectators the Chorus had a part, though a minor part, in every episode; between the episodes the Chorus—still in their character as spectators—voiced lyrically the successive impressions made by successive steps of the movement. They served further as a unity bond in the fact that their continuous presence reduced the whole action to a single situation, without the breaks that would have admitted varying scenes and diversities of time. And the fact that the Chorus are attached as confidants to some leading personage of the plot forces a unity of interest: to multiply stories would, in such tragedy, involve multiplying Choruses.[2]

We now turn to comedy.[3] I would again refer the reader to the somewhat elaborate diagram on page 166. As tragedy had arisen from the intermarriage of the Comus with the Chorus, so comedy—the 'Song of the Comus'—was made by the union of the Comus with the satiric dance. Its first form was that of a satiric burlesque. But the important stage in the evolution of comedy was that which followed after this: a stage which illustrates how the imitation of one literary form by another can be a disturbing force in literary evolution. A trace of this stage has been retained in a chance sentence of Aristotle, in which, when speaking of tragedy, he remarks parenthetically that "it was late before comedy obtained a Chorus from the magistrate." To "obtain a Chorus from the magistrate" was a technical expression which may be thus explained. Tragedies

[1] This general subject is treated below, chapter xxvi, pages 479–86.

[2] Hence the famous "three unities" of Greek drama: the unity of time, of place, and of action (that is, story).

[3] The evolution of ancient Greek comedy, and its analysis as a literary species, is fully treated in chapters vii–ix of my *Ancient Classical Drama*.

were magnificently staged at public festivals; the expense of such stagings was met by voluntary subscription, which placed so many Choruses at the disposal of the authorities; for a tragic poet to obtain a Chorus meant the right to have his drama brought out at the public expense. The remarkable point in the sentence of Aristotle is the word *Chorus:* what had comedy to do with a Chorus—a body of performers expensively trained in an elaborate art which was the very reverse of what belonged to comedy? We must read between the lines of Aristotle's sentence. The poets of comedy—at that time a rough popular burlesque—naturally envied their tragic brethren's right of public production at city festivals; there would be no precedent for their demanding from the magistrate a Comus; they boldly made application in due form for a Chorus, and obtained it. They now had the right of elaborate staging for their drama: but they also had on their hands this Chorus, which they must utilize. A Chorus is incompatible with comedy: but incongruity is itself a comic effect. Such seems to be the origin of the "Old Attic Comedy," the splendid poetic medium to which Aristophanes made his contributions. It is burlesque matter artificially molded to the structure of tragedy, which it follows in all its details of episodes and choral odes, stage lyrics, and the like. Of course, the comic Chorus is burlesqued: instead of Theban Senators or Maidens of Argos we get a Chorus of Clouds, of Birds, of Frogs. But the continual presence of a body of choral experts is a constant invitation to the higher flights of lyric art. In actual fact, the lyrics of Aristophanes can reach a poetic elevation that has never been surpassed—in his glowing pictures of clouds and the landscapes on which the clouds look down, his humorous fancies of bird life, his rapturous procession of the Initiated through Hades to the Elysian Fields; to say nothing of the lyric technique that is utilized for purely comic effect.[1] The difficult first step has been taken by this Old

[1] Compare chapter ix (of *Ancient Classical Drama*), *passim.*

Comedy in bringing together the comic and the serious; the play as a whole is political satire of the most farcical kind, but there is always the power of rising to delicate fancies, or in parenthetic passages—technically called parabases—of seriously discussing political questions. The mixture of tones effected by Aristophanic comedy remains an ideal for the whole of dramatic history.

The Classical drama which was a power at the Renaissance was Latin rather than Greek: we have yet to trace the progression from Greek to Roman.[1] In tragedy, evolution stops suddenly short with Euripides: what follows is imitation. We see another disturbing force in literary evolution: the conservative influence of a critical audience. A single generation of Grecian history had witnessed the rise from primitive poetry to the magnificence of the three great masters of drama; moreover, it was a grand poetic type that was thus evolved, combining the whole range of drama and lyric. It is perhaps not surprising that such a rapid development exercised a sort of spell upon the Athenian public;[2] contemporary criticism resented even the slight amount of innovation attempted by Euripides, while essential modifications of the model would be impossible. No change appears in tragedy until, late in Roman history, we have the drama of Seneca.[3] In superficial appearance this also is imitation of Attic tragedy, alike in subject-matter and form. In reality a deep-seated change has taken place—that the drama is dissociated from stage representation. It had been the visible

[1] This is discussed at length in chapters x and xi of *Ancient Classical Drama*.

[2] On this general subject compare *World Literature*, pages 16–20; and in the present work pages 87–88 of chapter iv, and again pages 305–7.

[3] This is fully discussed in *Ancient Classical Drama*, chapter v. Professor F. J. Miller's translation of the Seneca Tragedies (the University of Chicago Press), retains the metrical fluctuations, and in various ways excellently presents Seneca as an item of universal literature.

presence of the Chorus that had made the unity bond of Greek tragedy, holding it to its restrictions of form. In the Seneca plays the Chorus tends to the function of lyric songs between dramatic episodes. The Chorus retain their characterization, and can still take part in the dialogue; but also they can be ignored in large part of the scenes. In the *Octavia*, while the text still gives a *Chorus Romanorum*, yet a study of the play shows that this name really covers two distinct Choruses, one sympathizing with Octavia and the other sympathizing with her rival. Moreover, tragedy has passed under the influence of rhetoric, which was so dominant an influence in Latin literature; the matter of the Seneca plays is largely made up of highly rhetorical descriptions, and exchanges of passionate utterance rhetorically accentuated. This remark is not made in any disparaging sense: the rhetoric of Seneca is a noble rhetoric. But plot as the determining element of drama has weakened, and the plots of these plays are modifications of the Greek story mainly designed to multiply opportunities for rhetorical expansion.

Dramatic development, arrested in tragedy, has in comedy free course. The long interval of time between Aristophanes and Plautus was one of great dramatic fertility, but the product is all lost. Contemporary historians give evidence of some eight hundred dramas that have thus perished; they distinguish two distinct dramatic types, known as the Middle Attic comedy, and the New Attic comedy of Menander, of which last Roman comedy[1] is the imitation. The main morphological changes during this period of rapid literary evolution are easy to trace. In the Old Comedy the Chorus was a purely extraneous element: it is not surprising to find in the sequel that it rapidly faded, until in Roman comedy poetry has become mere music, and there is nothing to represent the Chorus except at intervals musical performances without words. Originally, the visible

[1] Roman comedy is discussed in chapter xi of *Ancient Classical Drama*.

presence of the Chorus had bound the whole play into a unity; in Roman comedy the musical remnants of this Chorus have broken the whole into a succession of separate 'acts.' It is here that we have the first appearance of what was destined to be so characteristic of drama—the presentation of a story, not continuously, but in successive phases of movement with breaks, and sometimes long intervals, between. Again: the matter of Aristophanic comedy had been political burlesque, with opportunities, through the Chorus, of serious reflections. In the course of development that followed we find the serious element steadily gaining upon the burlesque. In Roman comedy the burlesque gravitates toward the underplot, where it appears as caricature of stock social types, such as the saucy slave or the parasite. The main matter of the play is pure comedy: situations of intrigue and irony, mistaken identity ending with recognition, concealment and discovery, separation and reunion—all the various forms taken by the complication with its resolution which is the essence of comedy. But there is more than this. The Chorus, before it has entirely disappeared, has imparted to the matter of the play a tendency toward moralizing, for which lyric poetry is so suitable a medium. A marked feature of Roman comedy is this moralizing tendency: not merely simple reflections arising naturally out of the circumstances, but sustained moralizing as a distinct motive, often conveyed in meters which, in comparison with the rest of the play, may be called lyric.[1] The final type then of Classical comedy is a succession of acts embodying matter that is comic, with serious moralizings and burlesque relief.

But, viewed from the standpoint of world literature, the most striking morphological feature of Classical drama is that it is, from first to last, drama of situation.[2]

[1] For this moralizing, and its connection with meter, compare *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 383–87, 398, 401–9.

[2] Compare *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 414–20.

The presence of the Chorus in tragedy had limited the action to a single continuous scene; it must of course be the final phase of the story that is thus presented on the stage, previous phases being made known indirectly. In other words, interest of the story as a whole is subordinated to emphasis on the final situation. Aristophanic comedy, and the tragedy of Seneca, are imitations of this drama of situation. It is remarkable, however, that the same model holds sway in Roman comedy. It might have been expected that with the loss of the Chorus the limitation to a single scene would have gone: on the contrary, the conventional unity of scene is stronger than ever, and *the same scene* fits all Roman comedies—an open street containing the houses of the personages of the story.

This is all the more remarkable because, in Roman comedy, the natural evolutionary tendency toward increasing complexity of matter shows itself; the plots of Plautus and Terence admit multiplicity of distinct actions, but all are compelled into this unity of scene and situation. To illustrate from the *Phormio* of Terence as a typical case. Four personages enter into the story, who may conveniently be indicated as the Father, the Son, the Uncle, and the Nephew. The action shows three entirely distinct intrigues at work, making the plot scheme something like this.

Intrigue of the Nephew: to raise money for purchase of a slave-girl with whom he has fallen in love.

Intrigue of the Son: he has fallen in love with an orphan stranger, and contrives a mock law-suit to compel himself as next-of-kin to marry her.

Intrigue of the Old Men: to marry the Son to a girl who is a daughter of the Uncle by a bigamous marriage in a foreign country; thus making provision for the girl without revealing the liaison.

Underplot of caricature: Designing Slave—Parasite.

At the opening of the action all three intrigues are in mutual entanglement. The absence from home of the old men has made the intrigues of the Son and Nephew possible; their sudden return brings a crisis. The resolution is the sudden discovery that the orphan stranger whom the Son has tried to marry is the very daughter of the Uncle whom the old men desire to make his wife: but the discovery is not made before the contriving Slave has learned the old men's secret, and used this to extort the money with which the Nephew buys his slave. The whole movement of the play is thus a complex situation suddenly resolved.

Whether simple or complex, then, Classical drama always emphasizes the single situation at the expense of the story as a whole. It needed the influence of the Middle Ages, and the free play of epic story, to overcome this convention, and make the Romantic drama possible.

II

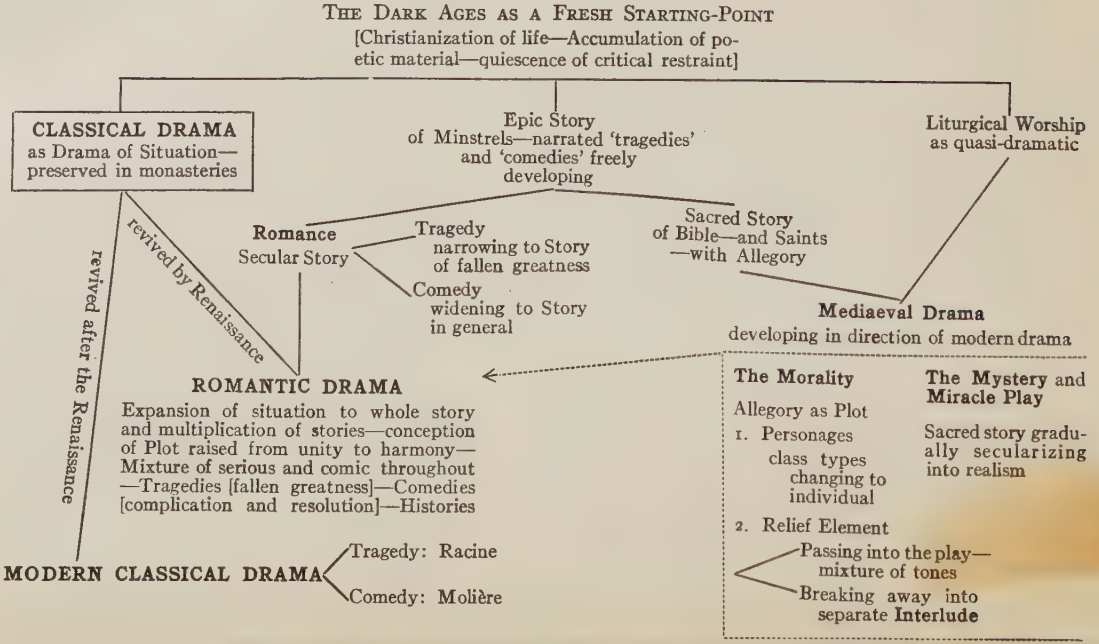
On page 176 will be found a literary chart (Chart XVI) which traces the evolution from Classical to Romantic drama, and brings out the relation to this general movement of the special literary types with which we are concerned.

The Dark Ages may be taken as a fresh starting-point for dramatic development. Roman civilization breaks up into chaos in the interminable wars with barbarian peoples. Three features of this period must be borne in mind. We have the Christianization of life, which makes the matter of Classical drama no longer possible; alike the matter of tragedy, which was leavened by the overpowering sense of destiny, and the corrupt life reflected in ancient comedy. Again, the so-called Dark Ages are, we have seen,[1] the period for vast accumulation of new poetic material, coming from a great variety of sources.

[1] Above, pages 87–88.

CHART XVI

Evolution from Classical to Romantic Drama


THE DARK AGES AS A FRESH STARTING-POINT
[Christianization of life—Accumulation of poetic material—quiescence of critical restraint]
CLASSICAL DRAMA
as Drama of Situation—preserved in monasteries
Epic Story
of Minstrels—narrated 'tragedies' and 'comedies' freely developing
Liturgical Worship
as quasi-dramatic
Romance
Secular Story
Tragedy
narrowing to Story of fallen greatness
Comedy
widening to Story in general
Sacred Story
of Bible—and Saints
—with Allegory
Mediaeval Drama
developing in direction of modern drama
revived by Renaissance
revived after the Renaissance
ROMANTIC DRAMA
Expansion of situation to whole story and multiplication of stories—conception of Plot raised from unity to harmony—Mixture of serious and comic throughout—Tragedies [fallen greatness]—Comedies [complication and resolution]—Histories
MODERN CLASSICAL DRAMA
Tragedy: Racine
Comedy: Molière
The Morality
Allegory as Plot
1. Personages
class types changing to individual
2. Relief Element
Passing into the play—mixture of tones
Breaking away into separate Interlude
The Mystery and Miracle Play
Sacred story gradually secularizing into realism

In the third place, it must be noted that the conservative force of a critical audience,[1] which had operated so powerfully in the case of Attic tragedy, is quiescent during the Middle Ages; and here a free field is offered for rapid literary change. From our point of view the most marked literary feature of the Dark Ages is that the theater is entirely displaced by the minstrel as the source of popular entertainment. There is a separation between the clergy, as the educated class, and the rest of society; society in general is capable of literary culture, but not the culture that comes from reading. Classical drama becomes a dead literature, stored up in the monasteries, read—and added to in a slight degree—by the clergy; but awaiting a future time for active influence on literature. On the other hand, Christian worship itself has dramatic tendencies which will operate a little later. Meanwhile, in the foreground of the literary field epic poetry is predominant. The age of the minstrels is the age of story: of narrative story in which the interest of the story itself is paramount over any interest in form.

It is worth while to note the bifurcation between sacred story and secular. The narratives of the Bible and the Lives of the Saints are a characteristic epic poetry of the Dark Ages; these naturally lend themselves to allegory, which becomes another important developing influence. On the other hand, we have the secular stories which make up the great literature of Romance. How completely the theater has given way to the minstrel is illustrated in the fact that the words 'tragedy' and 'comedy' are appropriated by the narrative stories of Romance. They are roughly distinguished as serious and comic: but toward the close of the Middle Ages a change comes into the use of these terms which has important consequences. A popular current of interest sets in—interest in fallen greatness. Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, Boccaccio's *De Casibus illustrium virorum*, illustrate it; and in the Elizabethan period it culminates

[1] Compare above, pages 87–88.

in the story-encyclopaedias entitled *The Mirror for Magistrates*, the component parts of which are stories of men who have been great and have fallen.[1] This popular interest leavened the meaning of the word 'tragedy,' which more and more came to suggest fallen greatness. Now, in proportion as the word 'tragedy' narrowed to this one type of serious story, in the same proportion the correlative term 'comedy' must widen, until it suggests story in general. This accounts for the remarkable fact that Dante names his epic *The Divine Comedy:* in his time the title suggests no more than the *story* of God's government of the world. And the distinction of tragedy as fallen greatness, and comedy as story in general, is found to underlie the Shakespearean drama itself.[2]

III

We may turn to the drama which is the special creation of the Middle Ages.[3] It starts in the worship of the church, and develops steadily in the direction of modern drama. The liturgy of the mediaeval church was in many ways dramatic in spirit. It centers around the Mass: this was not the celebration of an *opus operatum*, but rather the dramatization of a present miracle. The two great festivals of Christmas and Easter not only lent themselves to dramatic treatment, but were further the Christian counterparts of the nature festivals which, in heathen times, had been the occasion for Bacchic worship and for the first steps in the evolution of Greek drama. One form of mediaeval drama, the mystery, was early connected with the Easter rite known as *Passio, Sepultura, Resurrectio*—

[1] Compare Henry Morley's *First Sketch of English Literature* (Cassell), pages 335–38.

[2] Compare chapters viii and ix of my *Shakespeare as Thinker*.

[3] Compare A. W. Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature* (Macmillan), and Professor J. M. Manly's *Specimens of the Pre-Shaksperean Drama* (Ginn).

as if a three-act drama. In another form, the miracle play, we see interest in sacred story uniting with the dramatic spirit of ecclesiastical liturgy: the miracle plays were acted sermons. How close they were in origin to the ceremonies of the church is illustrated in their stage directions, such as that at the close of the miracle play of *Lazarus*, which directs that Lazarus shall go on with the *Te Deum*. Once introduced, the miracle play shows change in two directions. Single incidents grow into the collective miracle play, a grand historical drama covering the whole ground from the Creation to the Day of Judgment, and lasting in representation as much as three days. Again: the didactic purpose favors touches of realism for attraction of an unlettered audience. Thus, Noah—as a Biblical personage—may be treated with reserve, but Noah's family will be dragged in for parody of real life; the "Shepherds abiding in their fields by night" will be utilized for comic digression, until suddenly the singing of the Angels brings back the religious atmosphere. Growing realism is growing secularization of the sacred drama. And the advancing secularization is still more clear in mode of representation. The place of celebration changes from the inside of the church to the church steps, and gradually to unconsecrated ground; the actors, originally clerical, become mixed with jugglers and other purveyors of public amusement; and finally the whole direction of miracle plays passes into the hands of the trading companies. During the centuries that precede the Renaissance these miracle plays fill a great place in public life; the interest in the dramatization of story is being steadily developed as direct preparation for the Romantic drama.

But it is another type of mediaeval drama, the morality, which appears as the main field for morphological development. The morality[1] is a drama in which the plot is allegory: allegory

[1] For the general subject compare Ward's *History of English Dramatic Literature* (Macmillan), Volume I, pages 55–87. See in Index to that work the particular moralities cited below.

is an unstable form of poetic action, passing readily into other forms. The plot of a morality is really latent in the list of *dramatis personae:* without reading these somewhat dreary poems the student may, by casting his eye over the lists of *dramatis personae* cited below, catch the developmental changes that are taking place. Two main lines of development may be traced: one connected with the personages, the other with the relief element of the morality.

1. *The abstract qualities or theological ideas which form the dramatis personae of a morality tend to concretize and approach characterization.*

Properly and originally, the personages of such a play are pure abstract qualities and allegorical or theological ideas.

Castle of Perseverance.—World, Flesh, Devil—Human Race—Folly, Pleasure, Backbiter—Avarice, Seven Deadly Sins, Luxury—Confession, Penance—Seven Cardinal Virtues—Garcio (The Rising Generation)—Death, Soul, Mercy, Good and Bad Angel—Peace, Justice, Truth—The Father sitting in judgment.

Everyman.—God, Death, Fellowship, Kindred, Good Deeds, Knowledge, Confession, Strength, Discretion, Beauty, Five Wits.

Sometimes, it is by some device of interpretation that the abstract qualities pass into class types or individuals.

Respublica.—Prologue interprets Respublica as England, Nemesis as Mary, People as the English Nation, Suppression as the Reformation—followers of the last are Avarice, Insolence, Adulation—opponents are Justice, Peace, Truth, Mercy.

New Custom.—Perverse Doctrine, an old Popish Priest—Ignorance, another but elder—Hipocrisie, an old woman—Cruelty and Avarice, two Rufflers—New Custom and Light of the Gospel, two Ministers—Edification, a Sage—Assurance, a Virtue—God's Felicitie.

Or, names of whole classes of society come to be admitted amongst abstract qualities and allegorical ideas.

Nature of the Four Elements.—Natura Naturata—Studious Desire, Sensual Appetite, Ignorance, Experience—Taverner.

Play of the Weather.—Phoebus, Aeolus, Saturn, Phoebe, Jupiter—Gentleman, Ranger, Water-Miller, Wind-Miller, Gentlewoman, Laundress, Boy—Merry Report.

Again, we get qualities of character or of dramatic situation, summing up a whole character or situation in a single descriptive touch (like the characters of Bunyan).

Magnificence.—Felicity, Liberty, Adversity, etc.—Counterfeit Countenance, Crafty Conveyance, Cloked Allusion, Courtly Abusion.

All for Money.—Money, Pleasure, Godly Admonition, etc.—All for Money, a Magistrate—Learning with Money, Learning without Money, Money without Learning, Neither Money nor Learning—(as suitors) Moneyless and Friendless, William with the Two Wives, Nichol never out of the Law.

Play of Love.—Lover not Beloved, Woman Beloved not Loving, the Lover Beloved, Neither Loving nor Beloved.

Such descriptive touches are sometimes naturalized as personal names.

Hick Scorner.—Pity, Free Will, Imagination, etc.—Hick Scorner.

Like Will to Like Quoth the Devil to the Collier.—The Devil, The Collier—Nichol Newfangle—Good-Fame, Security, etc.—Ralph Roister, Tom Tosspot, Philip Fleming, Piers Pickpurse, Cuthbert Cutpurse, Hankee Hangman.

Names of this kind, it will be remembered, are quite common in the regular drama—Ralph Roister Doister, Madge Mumble-Crust, Andrew Aguecheek, Sir Toby Belch.

It is another form of the same type of dramatic change that, the morality being used to enforce political and historical truth, the history comes gradually to supersede the allegory.

Conflict of Conscience.—Hypocrisy, Tyranny, Avarice, Conscience, Sensual Suggestion, etc.—Philologus: interpreted in Prologue as Francis Spiera (an Italian lawyer, driven by persecution to suicide).

Albion Knight.—Albion, a Knight—Injury, and his mate Division—Double Device, a Spy—Justice, Peace, Plenty—Temporality, Spirituality (also referred to as Lords Temporal and Spiritual), Commonalty, Sovereignty.

King Johan.—Besides King Johan and Ynglond Vidua we have Verity, Nobility, Clergy, Civil Order, Imperial Majesty—four conspirators: Sedition, Dan Davy Dissimulation, Private Wealth, Usurped Power, who disguise themselves as Archbishop Langton, Raymundus, Cardinal Pandulphus, and the Pope, respectively.

The history is at last strong enough to stand by itself, and this type of the morality is absorbed in the regular drama.

2. *The second line of developmental change in the morality is connected with the relief element: this, at first extemporized, tends gradually to pass into the body of the play, assisting the mixture of tones; it then tends to break away from the play as a separate interlude.*

The heavy character of the morality as compared with the popular character of the audience necessitated (as in the case of the miracle plays) the introduction of comic and farcical elements as relief. These farcical portions of the morality were at first extemporized, two stock characters being reserved for this purpose—the Devil and Vice. Their function—like that of the Clown in a pantomime—was, in general, that the Vice belabors the Devil all through the action of the piece, but is carried off by the Devil at the end. Gradually these farcical characters pass into the body of the play.

Mind, Will and Understanding: contains "Lucifer with a gallant's array over his Devil's."

Marriage of Wit and Science: Ignorance gets invested in a Fool's coat.

The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art: Moros, the incorrigible dunce, is presented with a sword (emblem of the Vice), and ends by preferring to go to the Devil rather than be educated.

They assume various names, and have a distinct part in the action. Sometimes this is the part of a mischief-maker—foundation of the Villain of the regular drama.

In *Like Will to Like*, Nichol Newfangle, "tailor's apprentice to the Devil," introduces to the Devil the various characters.—In *All for Money*, Sin is the wicked magistrate's servant.—Jack Juggler, in the morality of that name, dresses like a certain lackey, and with blows persuades him out of his identity.—Common Conditions, in the play of that name, at first promotes and then hinders the progress of the love matches.—In a variety of other moralities, Vice appears under the names Injury, Iniquity, Idleness, Inclination, Subtle-shift, Ambidexter, Mischief.—In the *Play of Love*, the Vice is Neither Loving nor Beloved (compare above, page 181).

Or, the part played by the farcical characters is general meddling and folly—foundation for the rôle of Fool in the regular drama.

In *Appius and Virginia*, we have Haphazard, a general meddler.—In *Three Lords and Ladies of London*, Simplicity is called a Clown—*Play of the Weather* contains *Merry Report*, a go-between or messenger to Jupiter.—In *Goodly Queen Hester* we have Hardy Dardy, servant to Aman, a jester in a Fool's coat.

On the other hand, the farcical part tends to disconnect itself from the rest of the play. The morality thus splits into two parts. The didactic portion makes a form of drama called a dialogue, such as Heywood's *Dialogue of Wit and Folly*, between John and James, as to whether the wise man or the fool is happier: this is settled by Jerome as moderator in favor of the wise

man. The farcical part becomes a separate 'interlude.' This is a purely dramatic morceau, the equivalent of a single scene of a comedy, but complete in itself.

The Pardoner, Friar, Curate, and Neighbor Pratt: amusing contest for a pulpit, intended as exposure of clerical vices, the layman showing as the most decent of the party.

The Four P's: contest between the Pardoner, the Palmer, the 'Poticary and the Pedlar, as to which can tell the biggest lie; the 'Poticary winning by his assertion that he has never seen a woman out of patience.

An interlude of this kind is a joke or anecdote dramatized, and may stand as the unit play of modern drama.

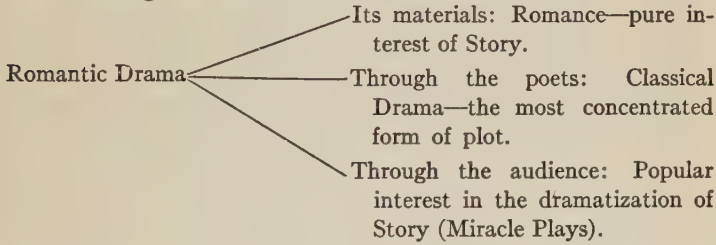
It belongs to the literary history of particular countries to deal with these forms of mediaeval drama, and with others such as pageants and masks, and to show the relationship of these to later literature. In our general view of world literature the essential point is that mediaevalism created its own type of drama, and that this was moving by clear evolutionary stages in the direction of what is the drama of the modern world, when the new influences brought by the Renaissance—the union between the recovered Classical drama and mediaeval Romance—created the splendid type of Romantic drama; into this what remained of the mediaeval drama was absorbed.

IV

The position in world literature of Shakespeare's plays is exactly given by the traditional title—the Romantic drama: the great marriage of drama and epic romance.

It never seems to occur to Shakespeare and the poets of his school to invent matter. The material is all taken from the story books of romance; and no poetic motive in the whole product is stronger than the desire to present the story, the whole story, and nothing but the story. The interest of the poets

is in the Classical drama newly recovered by the Renaissance; this Classical drama has (we have seen) the most highly concentrated form of plot—the whole story forced suggestively into a single situation.[1] From separate sources have thus come the interest of drama and the interest of story: an influence to bring these two interests together was at hand in the popular audiences, trained for generations by the miracle plays in the dramatization of familiar stories. The Romantic drama did for secular romance what for sacred literature had been accomplished by mediaeval drama. Its main constituents, then, from the morphological point of view may be represented by the following formula:


Romantic Drama
Its materials: Romance—pure interest of Story.
Through the poets: Classical Drama—the most concentrated form of plot.
Through the audience: Popular interest in the dramatization of Story (Miracle Plays).

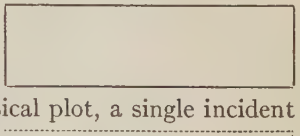
Of course, other influences assisted. There is the individual genius of Shakespeare: incapable of analysis, yet the most potent factor of all. An influence of a negative kind is the absence of critical restraint. The limiting conventions of Classical poetry were revived in full force by the Renaissance, but those who accepted them became a school to themselves, contemptuously leaving the popular drama to its own freedom. Again, the wide diffusion of Biblical literature provided for the new poetry an adequate philosophy of life: contrasting alike with the obsolete religious philosophy of the ancient world, and the narrowing outlook of Puritanism which was yet to come. From the freedom of mediaeval literature the Shakespearean

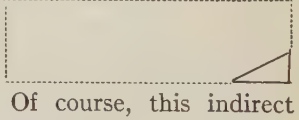
[1] Above, pages 173 ff.

drama inherited the mixture of tones, that gave to it the widest range of emotions, and the power of intensifying emotions by contrast. From the same source it inherited its conceptions of dramatic types: of comedy, as complication and resolution—life in equilibrium; of tragedy, as equilibrium overthrown—the interest of fallen greatness.[1] All these considerations count for much. But the main greatness of the Shakespearean drama rests on the union of epic and drama, each in its full strength. It had needed all the centuries of the Middle Ages, giving free course to narrative story, to break down the Classical limitation of story to situation: when at last it becomes possible to present a story as a whole, every part of it reaps the benefit of Classical concentration.

The evolution from Classical to Romantic drama reflects itself in the plots of Shakespeare's plays.[2]

We have, first, the expansion from the single situation to the story as a whole. If we adopt as a convention the horizontal line to denote succession in time, and the vertical line to denote variety in place, then the symbol for a full story will be the rectangle, suggesting a succession of incidents happening in a variety of places. For the plot of a Classical drama we must modify this figure: only the final angle of the rectangle will represent the Classical plot, a single incident in a single scene: the rest of the story—as suggested by the dotted lines in the figure—being left to inference and indirect suggestion. Of course, this indirect suggestion is itself an artistic effect, just as truly as direct

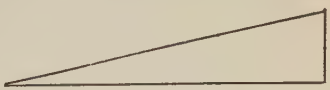




[1] These conceptions of comedy and tragedy are discussed in chapters viii and ix of *Shakespeare as Thinker*.

[2] What follows is substantially identical with *World Literature*, chapter iii, pages 175–78. For the general subject of plot in Shakespeare compare Appendix to *Shakespeare as Thinker;* or chapters xix, xx, of *Shakespeare as Artist*.

representation on the stage. For the treatment of a story in the Romantic drama the full rectangle is required: with unlimited time, and unlimited change of scene, all of the story that has dramatic effectiveness is represented on the stage. Again: in the drama of a single situation plot becomes identical with movement. Hence Greek criticism—which knew no type of drama but its own—lays its stress upon entanglement followed by catastrophe, in plays of the tragic type, and entanglement followed by resolution, in plays of the other type. The symbol for this is the inclined plane: movement in a certain direction to a turning-point and then rapid change. Where the full interest of the whole story is preserved, the line of movement becomes that of the regular arch, with a turning-point in the center. The play of *Macbeth* gives us the rise of Macbeth exactly balanced by his fall: the first half of the action is an unbroken

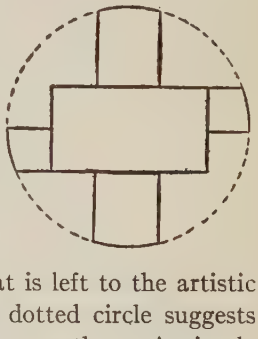


series of successes; the second half is an unbroken succession of failures; the passage from the rise to the fall—in the middle of the middle act—is an incident in which success and failure meet, the expedition to destroy Banquo and Fleance resulting in the death of Banquo and the escape of Fleance as his avenger. In such plays as *Winter's Tale* and *Cymbeline*, there is a falling action of growing entanglement through the first half of the play; the second half is an equally gradual restoration.[1] In Shakespeare's plots both lines of movement are maintained: the catastrophe or turning-point at

[1] See chapter iv of *Shakespeare as Thinker*, in which both plays are fully discussed (compare plot schemes on pages 350–51). The main points of *Winter's Tale*, and its plot scheme, are given below, pages 191 ff.

the end first catches the attention, but there is a logical turning-point in the center. Thus, in *The Merchant of Venice*, we naturally think of the turn of the movement in connection with the Trial scene, and Portia's happy solution of the entanglement of the bond. But in the middle of the middle act we have the successful choice of the casket which brings Portia and Bassanio together: but for this Portia would have had no interest in the fate of Bassanio's friend. It is the final catastrophe which appeals to the audience in the theater; but to the eye of logical analysis the central turning-point is always clear in the technique of the Shakespearean drama.[1]

But the richness of Shakespearean plot goes far beyond this: not only do we find a given story fully developed, but it is combined with others. The conception of plot is raised from the Classical unity of story to the Romantic harmony of many stories beautifully interwoven in a common design. Its graphic representation must be some such figure as that in the margin: this suggests combination of many stories, each developed in all the fulness its dramatic material admits; what is left to the artistic effect of indirect suggestion is—as the dotted circle suggests—the harmony of these stories with one another. A simple illustration is found in *The Merchant of Venice.*



Plot of Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice

1. Story of the Pound of Flesh: Antonio and Shylock
2. Story of the Caskets: Portia and Bassanio
3. Story of the Betrothal Ring: Portia and Bassanio
4. Elopement of Jessica and Lorenzo

[1] For other examples compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, Index under "Turning-Points."

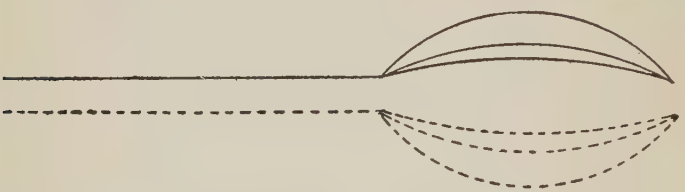
Underplot.—Portia and Bassanio duplicated in Nerissa and Gratiano—Transference of Jessica from Jewish to Christian side of the story duplicated in similar transference of the servant Lancelot

The interweaving of the first two stories is very simple: Bassanio, hero of the Caskets story, is the complicating force of the story of Antonio, for it is to raise money for Bassanio's visit to Portia that Antonio lets himself be entangled in the bond; it is the heroine of the Caskets story, Portia, who in the other story is the resolving force, making all right. The story of the Betrothal Ring is interwoven with the other two: the tension of the Trial scene is relieved by this escapade of the ring, and the balance of Portia's character is restored when it appears that the great lady who interposes in masculine disguise to save the state from a judicial murder is also a humorous girl with a fine eye for opportunities of mischief. All these three stories existed in books of romance, familiar to Shakespeare's audiences. The fourth story—of Jessica and Lorenzo—is used to fill up an interval of waiting in the other stories, the three months during which Shylock's bond is maturing. As if this were not enough to satisfy the romantic appetite for story multiplication, Shakespeare adds an underplot, in which two of the main stories are duplicated in personages of inferior rank.[1]

It is not the mere multiplication of stories, but also the symmetry of story with story, that enters into the Romantic idea of plot. In the play of *King Lear*, the main plot belongs to the royal family of Lear, the underplot to the family of the Earl of Gloster, the King's chamberlain. In the main plot, the action of Lear—the effect of a moment's passion—upsets the carefully prepared plan of succession to the crown, and takes power from the faithful Cordelia to transfer it to her unworthy sisters. In the sequel, three lines of action moving side by side keep before us the triple consequences of Lear's rashness: we have the double

[1] The play is fully discussed in chapters i to iii of *Shakespeare as Artist.*

nemesis upon Lear himself—ingratitude from the daughters exalted, tenderness from the child he had cast from him; we have again the suffering of the exiled Cordelia and her champion Kent; we have, in the third place, the spectacle of the power placed in the hands of the evil sisters used by them in adulterous intrigues which bring themselves and their lover Edmund to a common doom. In the underplot another father—through



ignorance rather than passion—does the same thing that Lear had done: takes power from the righteous son and transfers it to the son who is a villain. The sequel shows, side by side with the main plot, the same triple consequences—the double nemesis on the father, the sufferings of the innocent Edgar, and the spectacle of the elevation of Edmund leading him into the intrigues which seal his fate. The main plot is symmetrical with the underplot, each part to each; in the play itself Edgar hints at this symmetry when he says of Lear—

> He childed as I fathered!

And we have only to state the case over again from the standpoint of the children, instead of the standpoint of the fathers, to find that the perfect symmetry has become an equally perfect contrast. In the main plot a daughter, who has been cast out by her father, who has seen her inheritance given to her guilty sisters, is nevertheless seeking to save the father who did her the injury, when she falls at the hands of the sisters who profited by it. In the underplot a son, who has been unjustly advanced by his father, who has received the inheritance due to his innocent brother, is nevertheless seeking the death of the

father who did him the unjust kindness, when he falls at the hands of the brother who was wronged by it.[1]

The full technique of a Shakespearean plot can hardly be appreciated without a tabular statement, such as that offered on page 192 (Chart XVII) for the play of *Winter's Tale*. The line of movement is that of the regular arch: the descending movement of Leontes' fall is balanced by the ascending movement of the restoration; the two halves of the movement are further bound together by the dramatic interest of an oracle and its fulfilment. The first half of the action, in tragic tone, presents the sundering of Sicilia and Bohemia through the jealous madness of Leontes; with the rising movement there is a change to the pastoral tone, in which we see the reuniting of Sicilia and Bohemia through the romantic love story of Florizel and Perdita. The fall reveals itself as a sixfold destruction: Leontes loses his wife, his royal friend, his son, his newborn babe, his minister Camillo, and his faithful servant Antigonus. In the rise each separate element of loss is in some way retrieved: Antigonus' widow is united to Camillo, Camillo is restored as minister, and the lost daughter is found; the lost son is replaced in the son-in-law who is the royal friend's son, this friend is reconciled, and the lost wife is restored as if from the grave. The central turning-point of the movement is an oracle, which for the first time reveals the fulness of the destruction, and also—in enigmatic phrases—gives hope of full restoration. The sixfold basis of the movement is reflected in the very clauses of this enigmatic response of the oracle.

> Hermione is chaste;
> Polixenes blameless;
> Camillo a true subject;
> Leontes a jealous tyrant;
> His innocent babe truly begotten;
> And the king shall live without an heir,
> If that which is lost be not found.

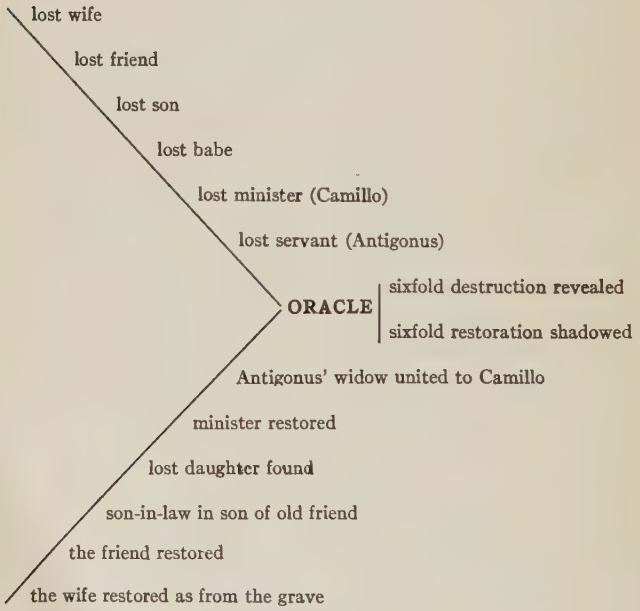
[1] For a full discussion of this play compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, chapter x, and pages 367–69.

CHART XVII

Plot of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*

Plot: An **ARCH PLOT** of Fall and Restoration—bound together by **ORACULAR INTEREST**

THE FALL: Tragic tone: Sundering of Sicilia and Bohemia through jealous madness of Leontes



THE RISE: Pastoral tone: Reuniting of Sicilia and Bohemia by the romantic love of Florizel and Perdita

Underplot of Relief: Atmosphere of rural simplicity (flavored with roguery) accompanying passage at center from complication to resolution

Finally, the change of tone at the center from tragic to pastoral is accentuated by an underplot of relief, in which the humorous clown Autolycus plays his rustic tricks. Nothing can better illustrate romantic plot as the harmony of stories than this play. Let any single term of the loss, with the corresponding item of the restoration, be abstracted from the rest, and told independently: it makes a complete whole, with full interest of personality and plot. Six such stories are woven into a common design, by devices of dramatic movement, with play of dramatic tone.

In the traditional study of Shakespeare there has been a long-continued eclipse of interest in plot. This has usually taken the form of a theory that Shakespeare was an "irregular genius," profound in his grasp of character and human life, but careless as to beauties of construction. The idea was assisted by the spirit of Renaissance criticism, which gratuitously assumed that Aristotle, who admirably analyzed the single type of drama he knew, had settled the form of dramatic poetry for all time. When the Shakespearean drama is examined by ideals of plot drawn inductively from the plays themselves, then it is abundantly evident that the added fulness of matter is balanced by adequate enlargement in conceptions of form. Shakespeare did not discard the Classical conception of plot, but absorbed its unity into a larger harmony. The plots of the Romantic drama are federations of Classical unit plots, with these units romantically expanded.

V

If the first effect of the Renaissance was to bring Classicalism to bear upon Romance, at a later period we have, mainly under leadership of French literature, a more direct revival of Classical spirit—a Modern Classical drama. It has given us two poets of the highest rank—Molière and Racine: the intrinsic literary

excellence of this poetry, if nothing else, compels their recognition in our world literature.

This is not the place to discuss at length the plays of Racine and Molière: our only question is, How far these are to be considered a revival of Classical drama. Our first reflection is that it was a conscious revival: its inspiration was not so much the ancient dramatists themselves, as the theorist Aristotle. There was no attempt to revive what was the most fundamental feature of Greek tragedy—the Choral element: the Chorus occasionally used by Racine has no resemblance to the Greek Chorus, which was the unity bond of the whole drama, but is merely such lyric poetry as may enter into any variety of play. The point of imitation was rather the other leading feature of Classical art: the Modern Classical drama is drama of situation. Yet the new type is alive to the profounder and more complex nature of modern life; it is a common remark as to both Racine and Molière that in their plays the situations are subordinated to interest of character. Again: although Racine was a Greek scholar, it was Roman rather than Greek drama which influenced the French poets, Seneca and Plautus rather than Sophocles and Aristophanes. Racine's plays have been described as sculpture galleries of all antiquity;[1] but the treatment is such as to give full scope for depicting passion—especially the passion of love. The rhetoric of Seneca may be an inspiration, but it is rhetoric tempered by the French genius for simplicity; not the simplicity that comes from lack of artifice, but from its complete mastery. Molière is above all things a master of the art of entertainment; he writes to order, and is ready to bring in all divertisements of dancing and music; he levies contributions on all types of drama—Spanish, Italian, the pieces of the *commedia dell' arte*, as well as the drama of Plautus and Terence. Where his plays come closest to the Latin originals, there is yet refreshing novelty in the modern

[1] Compare Frederic Harrison's *Choice of Books*, pages 53–54.

life that is fitted to the old molds. In his greatest dramas, such as *Tartuffe* and *Le Misanthrope*, the drama of situation becomes drama of character-situation: special types of personality surrounded by other personalities calculated to throw up the central figure. The enormous influence of Molière on modern comedy is due in the main to his inexhaustible flow of hilarious humor, a humor always adequate to the situation that has been created.

In a later age there seems to be some *rapprochement* between the two great types of world drama. Victor Hugo has the French attraction to the drama of situation; he also has a deep appreciation of Shakespeare, and the rich variety of life depicted in the Shakespearean plays. The result is a modification, which does not enlarge situation to story as a whole, but deepens the particular situations to admit more of human life in variety and depth. The plays of Victor Hugo may be considered as a Romantic Drama of Situation.[1]

VI

It remains to remark that the Classical and Romantic drama, and the Mediaeval drama of mystery, miracle play, and morality, comprehend between them only a minor part of dramatic literature. Other types abound. There is notably the Spanish drama. The peculiar geographical position of Spain enables it to feel the various influences that agitate the rest of Europe, and yet to modify them in its own way. Spain has had a Romantic drama that was all its own: strongly leavened with lyric motives, and inspired by passionate chivalry, and what might almost be called passionate devoutness. Its two great masters, Lope de Vega and Calderon, have been poets of the

[1] I have developed this idea in my Introduction to J. D. Bruner's *Victor Hugo's Dramatic Characters* (Ginn); and Mr. Bruner's able analysis of the characters furnishes copious illustrations.

highest genius and of almost incredible fertility. It is remarkable that the Romantic drama of Spain and the Romantic drama of England, while roughly contemporaneous, yet were in the main independent the one of the other. The influence of Spanish drama has been exerted on matter rather than on form: its stories and situations have contributed largely to the 'romance' which English and French poets have dramatized. Italy has a drama of its own, and led other nations in opera and ballet, and in the pastoral type of drama which has run a course through other European literatures. German drama was late in its appearance; but in Lessing and Schiller and Goethe has been cosmopolitan in character. At various periods specialized types have been in evidence, such as the heroic tragedy of Dryden, the comic drama of the Restoration in England, comedies of intrigue and comedies of manners; the comedy of sentiment; the literary burlesque of which the *Rehearsal* is an example; the problem drama in vogue at the present time. The modern nations of Europe are dramatically active, with the drama of Ibsen in the lead. But this drama of Ibsen itself shows various types: possibly the social plays now so popular will in the future be less prominent than such plays as *The Pretenders*, *Peer Gynt*, and the greatest of historical dramas—the ten-act drama of *Emperor and Galilean*.

The review of all these types belongs to literary history. In connection with the morphology of our world literature the important point is that differentiation of dramatic types, which has always been in operation, is now free from any counteracting influences. The Mediaeval drama is of course obsolete. Classical and Romantic drama have spent their force: they remain as magnificent types, which can be imitated, but have no longer any dominating influence. The dramatic inspiration of our own times is free to mold its matter in any form that conduces to poetic effectiveness, without restraint from preconceptions of orthodox type.

CHAPTER IX

EVOLUTION IN LYRIC POETRY

Lyric stands in a different position in our world literature from that of the other two branches of poetry. There is nothing in the field of lyric poetry corresponding to Homer in epic, or to Greek tragedy and comedy in drama. The morphological variations of lyric poetry seem natural; that is to say, they seem to arise from what is inherent in the nature of lyric poetry, without disturbing force from the paramount influence of some special type. The prominent points in the morphology of our lyric poetry are suggested in tabular form on page 198 (Chart XVIII).

I

In the chapter on literary elements, we noted as a fundamental property of lyric its power of mediating between the other two forms: how, without ceasing to be lyric, it could at any point take up epic narration, or pass into the presentative form of drama.[1]

This flexibility of lyric form is likely to show itself in any elaborate poem. Take, for example, *The Bard* of Gray, which announces itself as a Pindaric ode. At the commencement the poem is in a degree dramatic, for its opening words are addressed by the outraged Bard on his inacessible cliff to the English King moving with his army on the slopes beneath:

> 'Ruin sieze thee, ruthless King!
> Confusion on thy banners wait.'

A few lines farther on we have the simple epic narration of the poet:

> Such were the sounds that o'er the crested pride
> Of the first Edward scattered wild dismay,
> As down the steep of Snowdon's shaggy side
> He wound with toilsome march his long array.

[1] Above, pages 44 ff.

CHART XVIII

Morphology of Lyric Poetry

1. Attraction to Epic and Drama

Compare elaborate odes, such as Gray's *Bard*—narrative ballads—Amoebaean poems of **Theocritus**

Dramatic psalms of the Bible—Dramatic idyl of *Solomon's Song*

Lyrical epics of Shelley, Southey, Byron—and especially **DANTE**

2. Attraction to Philosophy

Wisdom literature (Biblical, Classical, modern) where the lyrical element preponderates—typical: *In Memoriam*, Browning's *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day*

3. Differentiation

between
- Choral: *Deborah's Song*—Chorus in Greek tragedy
- Individual: the great mass of songs, odes, etc.

between
- Objective: the mood prescribed from without
  - Hymns and ritual—Incantations—Encomia—(modern) Elegies
  - Occasional poems: **PINDAR**—Epithalamia, etc.
- Subjective: the crystallization of particular moods and sentiments: Love songs—Horatian odes—'Lyrics' *par excellence*

miscellaneous differentiation into unlimited number of types: lyric form readily coalescing with other forms (e.g., in Browning)

4. Inspiration of Technique

Sonnet
- Freer form of Biblical sonnet—or earlier European (compare *Hekatompathia*)
- Specific form of Italian and English sonnet: Dante, Petrarch, Milton, Wordsworth
- [Compare 'forms of false wit' in Addison's *Spectator*, No. 58]

Brevities (miniature sonnets)
- Biblical epigrams and number sonnets
- Classical and modern epigrams—especially the Greek *Anthology* and Martial
- Sanskrit quatrains
- Japanese 'tanka' [syllabic form]

5. Lyric Compounding

The *Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam

The Odes of **Horace**—Sanskrit centuries

Biblical Hallels—*The Songs of Ascents*

Biblical acrostic poems—especially *Lamentations*

Especially: Sonnet sequences (implying creative frame): **DANTE, PETRARCH, SHAKESPEARE**

The dramatic execration of the Bard continues at length until a sudden change takes place.

'Dear lost companions of my tuneful art,
Dear, as the light that visits these sad eyes,
Dear, as the ruddy drops that warm my heart,
Ye died amidst your dying country's cries—
No more I weep. They do not sleep.
On yonder cliffs, a grisly band,
I see them sit, they linger yet,
Avengers of their native land;
With me in dreadful harmony they join,
And weave with bloody hands the tissue of thy line.'

The poem has enlarged the dramatic scene it presents: besides the single Bard and the English army we have the phantom host on the farther cliffs; these now unite with the Bard in a ghostly incantation, that works up to a climax.

"Now, Brothers, bending o'er the accursed loom
Stamp we our vengeance deep, and ratify his doom.
Edward, lo! to sudden fate
(Weave we the woof. The thread is spun.)
Half of thy heart we consecrate.
(The web is wove. The work is done.)"

'Stay, oh stay! nor thus forlorn
Leave me unblessed, unpitied, here to mourn;
In yon bright track, that fires the western skies,
They melt, they vanish from mine eyes.

But oh! what solemn scenes on Snowdon's height
Descending slow their glittering skirts unroll?
Visions of glory, spare my aching sight,
Ye unborn Ages, crowd not on my soul.'

The disappearance of the phantom host on the one side is succeeded by overpowering visions of future ages and the triumph

of Wales on the other side: this second dramatic scene reaches a climax in the words of the Bard:

> 'Enough for me. With joy I see
> The different doom our Fates assign.
> Be thine Despair, and Sceptered Care,
> To triumph, and to die, are mine.'

The concluding lines return to epic narrative:

> He spoke, and headlong from the mountain's height
> Deep in the roaring tide he plunged to endless night.

The play of epic and dramatic, all within the bounds of lyric, is the great feature of this poem.

The coalescence of lyric with drama and epic is the source of varied and interesting poetic types. On the one hand, we have amoebaean poems, such as those of Theocritus and Virgil, which are an approach to drama; we have again the dramatic psalms of the Bible, already noticed,[1] and the more extended dramatic idyl of *Solomon's Song*.[2] On the other hand, coalescence of lyric with epic is seen, on a smaller scale, in the narrative ballads; on the larger scale it appears in the lyrical epics of Shelley, Southey, and Byron.[3] The tales of these three poets are elaborate epic poems; but they show a variation from ordinary epic in one important particular. The verse of epic poetry is usually in some continuous metrical form, a line or stanza which is sustained for many books together. This variety of epic is in lyrical meters, which shift with every line.

[1] Above, note to page 46.

[2] The text of this poem in the *Modern Reader's Bible* presents its structure as that of a lyric idyl. Other commentators arrange it as a drama. The question is fully discussed in *Literary Study of the Bible*, chapter viii (or in Introduction to the poem in *Modern Reader's Bible*). Compare also above pages 72–3.

[3] I would mention as specially important Southey's *Curse of Kehama*.

And something of lyric spirit goes with the lyric form. Take the opening stanza of Southey's *Thalaba:*

> How beautiful is night!
> A dewy freshness fills the silent air,
> No mist obscures, nor cloud, nor speck, nor stain,
> Breaks the serene of heaven:
> In full-orb'd glory yonder Moon divine
> Rolls through the dark blue depths;
> Beneath her steady ray
> The desert circle spreads,
> Like the round ocean, girdled with the sky.
> How beautiful is night!

The meter of meditative poetry clothes a piece of meditative description; and it is this power of meditative narration which differentiates these lyrical epics from epic poetry in general.

An extreme illustration of the lyrical epic is found in the *Divine Comedy* of Dante.[1] This is in the fullest sense epic poetry, the sustained narration of a past experience. But the poet who narrates is himself the traveler of the mystic journey through Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise: already we have an approach of narrative to meditation. When we examine the meter of the poem, we find its unit as the *terza rima* which is an element in the structure of lyric sonnets. The spirit that goes to the building up of a sonnet applies to Dante's poem—the limitation of matter by structure: exactly thirty-three cantos are assigned to each of the three divisions of the theme, with an introductory canto that brings the total to the perfect number of one hundred. Not only is this true in fact, but further, the poet draws attention to it in the text:

> If, Reader, I possessed a longer space
> For writing it, I yet would sing in part
> Of the sweet draught that ne'er would satiate me:
> But inasmuch as full are all the leaves
> Made ready for this second canticle,
> The curb of art no farther lets me go.[2]

[1] Compare *World Literature*, chapter iv.

[2] *Purgatory*, close of canto xxxiii.

The 'curb of art' extends to the matter of the poem: what appears on the surface as free narrative is in reality a systematized digest of moral and religious speculation conveyed in narrated symbol. The *Divine Comedy* is the perfect marriage of lyric and epic.

This flexibility of lyric poetry is perhaps its most important morphological characteristic.[1] It has ingeniously been suggested that lyric poetry, as meditation, is poetry of the first person; drama, which implies an audience, is poetry of the second person; epic, in which a narrator is interposed between the reader and the events, is poetry of the third person. If this be so, it is clear that poetry of the first person can, by simply addressing itself to an imagined auditor, become presentation; again, the range of meditation covers meditative description, which is an approach to epic. The ballad dance, in which all forms of poetry are embryonically latent, appears on the surface as lyric poetry.

II

The Table of Literary Elements[2] brings out the relation of lyric poetry, not only to epic and drama, but also to philosophy. It is the poetic counterpart of philosophy: having the full philosophic function of meditation, but extending the range of this meditation into creative regions of fancy and imagination. Accordingly, the attraction toward philosophy distinguishes one main division of lyric poetry. Wisdom[3] is the name for the philosophy that maintains its fulness of range, before it has committed itself to the strictness of analysis which fixes philosophy to prose literature, and even carries it into the region of technical discussion. Lyric, as an organ of meditation, has

[1] Compare above, chapter ii, *passim.*

[2] Above, page 18.

[3] For wisdom literature in general compare below, chapter xix. For Biblical Wisdom, Book V in *Literary Study of the Bible.*

more place in such wisdom literature than either epic or drama. Poems of the sonnet order figure largely in Biblical wisdom. In the modern counterpart of this, it is lyric poetry such as *In Memoriam*, or Browning's *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, and the like, that are specially characteristic.

III

The freedom from the domination of special types, and the power of freely coalescing with other forms, make lyric poetry a field of literature in which differentiation has the widest scope. The distinction between these varied and miscellaneous types belongs to literary history; but there are two notable differentiations that concern lyric poetry as a whole. One is the distinction between choral and individual lyrics. The great mass of songs, odes, and short poems of this kind are individual poetry; the most important lyric poetry of the Greeks was choral. The different use of the word 'chorus' in modern music must not make us forget that the Chorus[1] of ancient tragedy and comedy always retained its characterization: it was as Senators or Maidens, or as Clouds and Frogs, that the dramatic Chorus carried on its meditation. Pindar is one of the supreme names in lyric poetry; the poems of Pindar that have come down to us are all utterances of so many Choruses—bands of professional singers who, as a body of admirers of a hero, celebrate victories. One of the most impressive examples of choral lyrics comes from the Bible—Deborah's Song.[2] This introduces itself as a Double Chorus, a Chorus of Men led by Barak and a Chorus of Women led by Deborah; and the characterization must be understood throughout. The Men and Women unite in common aspiration, or separate with snatches

[1] For the general subject of the Greek Chorus compare *Ancient Classical Drama*, chapter iii.

[2] Judg., chap. 5: see the structure as presented in the *Modern Reader's Bible*.

of song, or cheer one another on to the task of celebration. It is the Men who describe the fallen condition of the nation, the Women who break in with the appearance of Deborah to rouse the people against the foe; the Men describe the advance of the foe, the Women sing how the stars in their courses fought for Israel; the Men, as fighters, bring out the strain of battle, and the Women, as spectators, voice the disappointment at the failure of Meroz to come up in time; finally the Men gloat over the destruction of Sisera, the Women fancy his mother awaiting him at home. In contradistinction to all this, the other kind of lyric stands only for an individual speaker; or will often be 'absolute,' without any characterization whatever.

A second important differentiation is that between objective and subjective. Objective lyrics are such as hymns, ritual poems, incantations, encomia, elegies (in the modern usage of that word[1]), occasional poems like the athletic celebrations of Pindar or the modern epithalamia. In all these types the mood of the poem is prescribed from without—by the occasion, or by the object of adoration or celebration, or by the nature of the ritual; what the particular lyric has to do is to invent matter to satisfy this mood. On the other hand, in odes of the type of Horace, in love or sentimental songs, the inspiration comes from within. The term 'lyrics' *par excellence* applies to the crystallization in brief poetic form of particular moods or sentiments.

[1] In ancient Greek poetry what are called "elegies" are in the main patriotic or love poems: it is doubtful whether the term was ever applied to sad or funereal matter. By Ovid's time the term has come to describe a particular meter: the combination of hexameter and pentameter so beautifully characterized by Schiller:

> In the hexameter rises the fountain's silvery column,
> In the pentameter aye falling in melody back.

In modern English the word always suggests a dirge: compare *Lycidas* or *Adonais*.

IV

There is one highly specialized kind of literature which takes high rank in the field of lyrics, and emphasizes the separation of lyric from other poetry. This includes varieties of poems of which the sonnet[1] is the main type. It seems natural in literature that form should always adapt itself to matter: what constitutes a poem of the sonnet order is, on the contrary, that form dominates matter. Particular structural types become current: into the mold of this accepted structural type the matter must pour itself, exactly filling it, but not overflowing. At the present time one single mold has become established for the sonnet of Italian and English literature: it must be a poem of exactly fourteen lines, neither more nor less. Within this limitation there are yet varieties of sonnet formation: sometimes the structural law has to do with delicate relations between the first octave and the sestette that follows; in other sonnets, like the sonnets of Shakespeare, the constituting principle is found in the way that the final couplet draws to a head the ideas that have been flowing with comparative freedom through the other lines. It is perhaps because lyric retains more of the musical element than epic or drama that technical elaboration comes to have so great a place in it; for poems of the sonnet order the inspiration is the inspiration of technique. This is specially evident in such a work as Dante's *Vita Nuova*,[2] in which we have, not only a series of sonnets, but with each of them the poet's metrical commentary; this commentary strongly suggests how the conception of each separate poem is a structural idea which the poet has proceeded to execute.

[1] For the general subject compare C. Tomlinson's *The Sonnet and Its Origin* (Murray). For the application of the term to Biblical literature compare *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 306–15, 521 (or in *Modern Reader's Bible*, Introduction to Proverbs).

[2] Rossetti's translation, in Temple Classics (Dent).

This notion of technical structure as inspiration receives emphasis from a class of compositions which carry us outside the bounds of recognized poetry, into what Addison in the *Spectator* calls the Forms of False Wit.[1] He begins with "short poems printed among the minor Greek poets, which resemble the figure of an egg, a pair of wings, an axe, a shepherd's pipe, and an altar."

> The pair of wings consist of twelve verses, or rather feathers, every verse decreasing gradually in its measure according to its situation in the wing. The subject of it (as in the rest of the poems which follow) bears some remote affinity with the figure, for it describes a god of love, who is always painted with wings.

He mentions as a modern example—

> that famous picture of King Charles the First, which has the whole book of psalms written in the lines of the face, and the hair of the head. When I was last at Oxford I perused one of the whiskers, and was reading the other, but could not go so far in it as I would have done, by reason of the impatience of my friends and fellow-travelers, who all of them pressed to see such a piece of curiosity.

He mentions as another form the ancient 'lipogrammatists,' or letter-droppers, like Trypiodorus:

> He composed an Odyssey or epic poem on the adventures of Ulysses, consisting of twenty-four books, having entirely banished the letter A from his first book, which was called Alpha (as *lucus a non lucendo*) because there was not an Alpha in it. His second book was inscribed Beta for the same reason.

The absurd exaggeration simply makes the principle of inspiration from technique more plain.

The authorized version (so to speak) of the sonnet as a poem of fourteen lines is a mere accident of literary history, like the three unities as the defining form of Attic tragedy. The essence of sonnet morphology is the forcing of thought into structural

[1] *Spectator*, Nos. 58–63.

molds: it makes no difference whether one or many such structural molds be recognized. In earlier European sonnets the form could vary. Thomas Watson's *Hekatompathia*[1] is an illustration. The term 'sonnet' is applied by the poet to the several 'passions' of which the poem is made up; they consist regularly of eighteen lines, and in one of his prefatory notes he says:

> All, except three verses, which this Author hath necessarily added for perfecting the number, which he hath determined to use in every one of these his passions [are from Petrarch].

The sonnet follows.

> I joy not peace, where yet no war is found;
> I fear, and hope; I burn, yet freeze withal;
> I mount to Heav'n, yet lie but on the ground;
> I compass nought, and yet I compass all:
> I live her bond, which neither is my foe,
> Nor friend; nor holds me fast, nor lets me go;
> Love will not that I live, nor lets me die:
> Nor locks me fast, nor suffers me to 'scape;
> I want both eyes and tongue, yet see and cry;
> I wish for death, yet after help I gape;
> I hate myself, yet love another wight;
> And feed on grief, in lieu of sweet delight;
> At selfsame time I both lament and joy;
> I still am pleased, and yet displeased still;
> Love sometimes seems a God, sometimes a Boy;
> Sometimes I sink, sometimes I swim at will;
> Twixt death and life, small difference I make;
> All this, dear Dame, befalls me for thy sake.

The freest form of sonnet structure belongs to the wisdom literature of the Bible and Apocrypha. The parallelism which is the basis of Biblical verse is a parallelism of consecutive lines: but there is, especially in wisdom poetry, what may be termed

[1] Edited in the Arber Reprints.

a higher parallelism,[1] binding together portions of a poem that may be widely separated. The following poem is slight in itself, but by its very simplicity illustrates the more clearly the conception of its type.[2]

My son, if sinners entice thee,
Consent thou not.

If they say, Come with us,
Let us lay wait for blood,
Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause;
Let us swallow them up as Sheol,
And whole, as those that go down into the pit;
We shall find all precious substance,
We shall fill our houses with spoil,
Thou shalt cast thy lot among us;
We will all have one purse:
My son, walk not thou in the way with them;
Refrain thy foot from their path:
For their feet run to evil,
And they make haste to shed blood.
For in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird:
And these lay wait for their own blood,
They lurk privily for their own lives.
So are all the ways of every one that is greedy of gain;
It taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

The technical form of this is 1, 1; 9, 9: that is to say, a thought is advanced in the form of a protasis and apodosis, one line each; then follow two blocks of nine lines each; the first block is amplification of the protasis, the second block amplification of the apodosis. A more elaborate example has the form 4, 3; 8, 6: a quatrain of apprehension answered by a triplet of prayer augments into a double quatrain of apprehension answered by a double triplet of prayer.[3]

[1] *Literary Study of the Bible*, chapter ii.

[2] Prov. 2:10–19 (as arranged in *Modern Reader's Bible*).

[3] Ecclesiasticus 22:27—23:6 (as arranged in the *Modern Reader's Bible*).

Who shall set a watch over my mouth,
And a seal of shrewdness upon my lips,
That I fall not from it,
And that my tongue destroy me not?

O Lord, Father and Master of my life,
Abandon me not to their counsel:
Suffer me not to fall by them.

Who will set scourges over my thought,
And a discipline of wisdom over my heart;
That they spare me not for mine ignorances,
And my heart pass not by their sins:
That my ignorances be not multiplied,
And my sins abound not;
And I shall fall before mine adversaries,
And mine enemy rejoice over me?

O Lord,
Father and God of my life,
Give me not a proud look,
And turn away concupiscence from me.
Let not greediness and chambering overtake me,
And give me not over to a shameless mind.

To generalize: in these sonnets of wisdom literature each poem may set its own mold, but the spirit of the sonnet is felt bringing matter exactly to fill and satisfy the particular structural form.

In various literatures the same inspiration of technique applies to compositions of a much briefer kind: under their various names they are all miniature sonnets. The clearest example is the number sonnet[1] which occurs so frequently in the wisdom literature of Scripture. Here the structural mold is clearly prescribed—in some numerical form—in the opening lines; and the rest of the poem carries it into execution.

[1] *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 308–10 (or Introduction to Proverbs in *Modern Reader's Bible*).

There be three things which are too wonderful for me,
Yea, four which I know not:
The way of an Eagle in the air;
The way of a Serpent upon a rock;
The way of a Ship in the midst of the sea;
And the way of a Man with a Maid.[1]

This numerical type of structure is occasionally carried into a longer poem.

There be nine things which I have thought of,
And in mine heart counted happy;
And the tenth I will utter with my tongue:

A man that hath joy of his children;
A man that liveth and looketh upon the fall of his enemies;
Happy is he that dwelleth with a wife of understanding;
And he that hath not slipped with his tongue;
And he that hath not served a man that is unworthy of him;
Happy is he that hath found prudence;
And he that discourseth in the ears of them that listen;
How great is he that hath found wisdom!
Yet there is none above him that feareth the Lord.

The Love of the Lord passeth all things:
He that holdeth it, to whom shall he be likened?[2]

Almost as strongly defined is the structure of the Biblical epigram. The proverb of Biblical literature is a couplet or triplet: a unit of thought in a unit of form. What constitutes a Biblical epigram[3] is a slight expansion of this in which the unit proverb

[1] Prov. 30:18.

[2] Ecclesiasticus 25:7–11, as arranged in *Modern Reader's Bible;* see note for change of reading in the last line but one.

[3] For Biblical epigrams see *Literary Study of the Bible,* page 294 (or in *Modern Reader's Bible,* Introduction to Proverbs). The illustrations are from Prov. 23:4–5 and 6–8.

is preserved intact. Thus, the following could clearly stand alone as a proverb:

> Weary not thyself to be rich;
> For riches certainly make themselves wings.

The actual epigram contains this amplified:

> Weary not thyself to be rich;
> Cease from thine own wisdom.
> Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
> For riches certainly make themselves wings,
> Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven.

Similarly, in every such epigram two lines will be found (not necessarily consecutive) which could stand alone as a proverb: the rest is exegetical of these lines. This structural idea of germ proverb and expansion will be caught in a longer specimen.

> Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye,
> Neither desire thou his dainties;
> For as one that reckoneth within himself, so is he:
> Eat and drink, saith he to thee;
> But his heart is not with thee.
> The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up,
> And lose thy sweet words.

The two lines indented on the left could stand alone as a proverb, but the phrase "one that reckoneth within himself" is not obvious in meaning; if additional lines exegetical of this phrase are added to support the second line, the balance of the epigram requires another line to support the first.

The epigram is a form that abounds in Classical and modern literatures, but it is not easy to define it. Etymologically the word means 'inscription,' and large part of the Greek and Latin epigrams are inscriptions on vases, statues, tombs, and the like. Such inscriptions call for something of form, but there seems nothing to determine the kind of form, except general neatness, and above all brevity and the sense of unity. The epigram

may be considered the unit of lyrics, counterpart to the epic anecdote. The Greek epigrams of the *Anthology* are hard to translate: I give a few in Mr. Burgess's[1] prose version, which seems to bring out the essential point of the epigram better than the versified English adaptations.

A blind man carried on his back a lame one, having lent feet and borrowed eyes.

When old age is absent, every one prays for it; but if at any time it comes, every one finds fault with it. It is always better when it is a debt not paid.

I am armed against Love with reason around my breast; nor shall he conquer when one is against one; and I a mortal will stand up with an immortal. But if he has Bacchus as an assistant, what can I do single-handed against two?

Of this last Mr. Burgess quotes Fawke's verse rendering:

> With love I war, and reason is my shield,
> Nor ever, match'd thus equally, will yield:
> If Bacchus joins his aid, too great the odds;
> One mortal cannot combat two such gods.

Illustrations may be added from Martial,[2] as the great master of Latin epigram.

Diaulus had been a surgeon, and is now an undertaker. He has begun to be useful to the sick in the only way that he could.

"Quintus is in love with Thais."—What Thais?—"Thais with one eye."—Thais wants one eye; he wants two.

Why do I not send you my books, Pontilianus? Lest you should send me yours, Pontilianus.

[1] In Bohn's series.

[2] Translation in Bohn's series.

A cunning thief may burst open your coffers, and steal your coin; an impious fire may lay waste your ancestral home; your debtor may refuse you both principal and interest; your corn-field may prove barren, and not repay the seed you have scattered upon it; a crafty mistress may rob your steward; the waves may ingulf your ships laden with merchandise. But what is bestowed on your friends is beyond the reach of fortune; the riches you give away are the only riches you will possess for ever.

Modern epigrams hardly need illustration: nothing could convey the spirit of this form better than the well known epigram on Milton by Dryden.

> Three poets, in three distant ages born,
> Greece, Italy, and England, did adorn.
> The one in loftiness of thought surpass'd;
> The next in majesty; in both the last.
> The force of nature could no further go,
> To make a third, she joined the former two.

The counterpart of the epigram in Sanskrit literature seems to be the quatrain, of which 'centuries' are composed by Indian poets. Mr. Macdonnell[1] in his history thus describes them:

The main bulk of the lyrical creations of mediaeval India are not connected poems of considerable length, but consist of that miniature painting which, as with a few strokes, depicts an amatory situation and sentiment in a single stanza of four lines. These lyrics are in many respects cognate to the sententious poetry which the Indians cultivated with such eminent success. . . . . Many of them are in matter and form gems of perfect beauty.

Speaking of the difficulty of keeping up in translation the elaborate meters of the original, he offers specimens of which two may here be quoted.

[1] History of Sanskrit literature in *Literatures of the World* (Appleton), pages 339–44.

Let not thy thoughts, O Wanderer,
Roam in that forest, woman's form:
For there a robber ever lurks,
Ready to strike—the God of Love.

Remembered she but causes pain;
At sight of her my madness grows;
When touched, she makes my senses reel:
How, pray, can such an one be loved?

The most pronounced form of these brevities comes from Japanese literature, where we get down to a form measured, not by lines or even feet, but by syllables. Mr. Aston's history of that literature[1] thus describes them.

The best known meter constructed on this principle is what is known as "Tanka" or "short poems." When poetry is spoken of in Japan it is usually this kind of verse that is meant. It consists of five phrases or lines of 5, 7, 5, 7 and 7 syllables—31 syllables in all. Each of these stanzas constitutes an entire poem. . . . . It may be thought that in the compass of 31 syllables, and with the other limitations to which the poet in Japan is subject, nothing of much value can be the result. This, however, is far from being the case. . . . . It is wonderful what felicity of phrase, melody of versification, and true sentiment can be compressed within these very narrow limits. In their way nothing can be more perfect than some of these little poems. They remind us of those tiny carvings known to us as Netsuke, in which exquisite skill of workmanship is displayed in fashioning figures of an inch or two in height, or of those sketches where the Japanese artist has managed to produce a truly admirable effect by a few dexterous strokes of the brush.

Of course, for poems of such a nature translation can be little more than imitation. Of Mr. Aston's specimens these are perhaps the ones that most impress an English reader; the last of the three is a perfect gem.

[1] In *Literatures of the World* (Appleton), pages 28–29, 42–48.

In yearning love
I have endured till night.
But tomorrow's spring day
With its rising mists,
How shall I ever pass it?

My love is thick
As the herbage in spring,
It is manifold as the waves
That heap themselves on the shore
Of the great ocean.

The sky is a sea
Where the cloud-billows rise;
And the moon is a bark;
To the groves of the stars
It is oaring its way.

V

Lyrics being so commonly short compositions, it is natural that they should to a large extent appear in collections. A new interest of lyric poetry arises when the poems of a collection are not miscellaneous, but are compounded into a higher unity. In the Bible the Book of Psalms appears as a miscellany. But certain psalms, numbered as consecutive poems, draw together into "Hallels"— or hymns for festal occasions.[1] The Egyptian Hallel comprehends Pss. 111–18, the Great Hallel, Pss. 145–50. Again, Pss. 120–34 are unified by a common title[2]—"Songs of Ascents," or literally, "Songs of the Goings Up." The significance of the title is disputed: probably, the "goings up" are intended to cover *both* the pilgrimages to the sacred feasts at Jerusalem, and the return from Babylonian captivity regarded

[1] See the Hallels as arranged in text of *Modern Reader's Bible*. Compare also Pss. 95–100.

[2] See note to Pss. 120–34 in *Modern Reader's Bible* (or *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 165–67).

as a pilgrimage. As the Psalms stand in our Bibles they constitute only a collection; it is possible by altering the order to read[1] them into an organic unity, starting with the lowest depths of the captivity (in Ps. 130), and reaching the climax of the festival in the Benediction of the Night Watch to the Retiring Congregation (Ps. 134).

In this connection may be mentioned the acrostic lyrics[2] of Scripture. The word is not used in the modern sense, where the alphabetical arrangement of initial letters spells a name. The initial lines simply follow the order of the alphabet. Thus the alphabetical scheme has no bearing on the thought, but seems a device of aggregation. It applies to poems of which the separate verses have much the air of independent lyric proverbs: the sequence is aggregation and nothing more. It is elaborate in the case of the 119th psalm: still more in the Lamentations[3] traditionally ascribed to Jeremiah. The whole spirit of this Dirge over Fallen Jerusalem is the compounding, by various devices, of lines which can usually stand alone; each single one a wail in the striking meter of lamentation, which may perhaps be represented in English by the refrain of David's Lament over Saul and Jonathan—

How are the mighty< >fallen!

The most notable illustration of poetic compounding applied to lyric poetry comes from what I have called collateral world literature. A Persian original, worked over by the English poet Fitzgerald, has eventuated in what appears as the master-

[1] The order I suggest is 130, 129, 120, 123; 126, 124, 121, 127, 128, 131; 125, 122, 133, 132, 134.

[2] *Literary Study of the Bible:* see Index under "Acrostic" (or in *Modern Reader's Bible*, Note to Pss. 9–10).

[3] See structural arrangement of the poem in the *Modern Reader's Bible.* (In the small-volume edition this will be found at the close of the second volume of Psalms. In the one-volume edition, the text begins page 876; the Introduction, page 1440.)

piece of lyric wisdom for all literature. I refer, of course, to the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.*[1] The word *Rubaiyat* is plural, and may be rendered 'Epigrams.' The quatrains of the English version, with their peculiar rhythmic shape, represent the traditional form of the epigram in Persian poetry; and in the complete poem each epigram has a measure of independence. But—as in Hebrew wisdom we see gnomic sayings cluster[2] into sonnets and essays—so here the successive epigrams draw together into a sequence of thought. The unity of the whole as a Meditation on Life is assisted by the concealed image of a Day running through the poem, which opens with the freshness of morning, and closes with the serenity of moonlight. The full lyric flavor is not appreciated unless the reader catches the independent strength of the separate quatrains as well as the cumulative significance of the whole.

Two other types of lyric compounding may be mentioned. We have, in the works of Dante, Petrarch, and especially Shakespeare, the sonnet sequence: the poems stand individually separate, but suggest an underlying story as creative framework. In Dante's *Vita Nuova*,[3] the story is made clear by the poet's commentary. In Shakespeare's Sonnets[4] the question is still discussed whether what the succession of poems suggests is a real history, personal to the poet, or a purely imaginative plot. Very different from such sonnet sequence is the case of the Odes of Horace.[5] These present themselves purely as a miscellaneous collection of short odes in four books. But there is a strong suggestion that the whole collection may be read as the reflection of an Epicurean mood upon the various items of life that

[1] Compare *World Literature*, pages 312–18.

[2] Compare *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 299 ff.

[3] Rossetti's translation in Temple Classics (Dent).

[4] See Introduction to Dowden's edition (Kegan Paul).

[5] Translations in one volume of Temple Classics (Dent).

surround the poet. Certainly a new interest comes into the well-known ode in which Horace surveys his whole work, in such phrases as—

Exegi monumentum aere perennius—

and again—

Non omnis moriar—

if we may regard the sum total of the poems, not as a monument simply of poetic skill, but as an Epicurean profession of faith.

This Third Book has limited its survey of literary evolution to that body of correlated literature which constitutes world literature from the English point of view. It would swell the size of this volume too far to attempt anything more. Of course, the civilizations entering into our literary pedigree, and the literatures in which these are reflected, have each one an evolution of its own; the general processes of literary evolution manifest themselves, and the particular history of the civilization brings disturbing forces. But what is drawn from collateral and extraneous literatures enters our world literature as so much addition, not modification. And for additions of this kind there is usually needed some form of mediating interpretation. The simplest is translation, which merely transplants a work from one language to another. A deeper mediating interpretation is seen when a Fitzgerald, or Southey, or Edwin Arnold, applies original creative thinking to imaginative matter belonging to a foreign civilization. Such enrichment of our world literature by mediating interpretation seems to be on the increase.[1] And this is much to be desired: no mode of deepening culture is more important than enlarging the field of our sympathies.

[1] Compare *World Literature*, pages 231, 311–12, 334, 376, 378.

BOOK IV

LITERARY CRITICISM

THE TRADITIONAL CONFUSION AND THE MODERN RECONSTRUCTION

CHAPTER X: Types of Literary Criticism and Their Traditional Confusion

CHAPTER XI: Speculative Criticism.—The Fundamental Conception and Function of Poetry

CHAPTER XII: Speculative Criticism.—The Evolutionary Theory of Taste

CHAPTER XIII: Inductive Criticism: or the Criticism of Interpretation

CHAPTER XIV: The History of Critical Opinion

CHAPTER XV: Judicial Criticism: or Criticism in Restraint of Production

CHAPTER XVI: Subjective Criticism: or Criticism Accepted as Literature

CHAPTER XVII: The Place of Criticism in the Study of Literature

CHAPTER X

TYPES OF LITERARY CRITICISM AND THEIR TRADITIONAL CONFUSION

Literary criticism, in the most elastic meaning of the term, is literature discussing itself. It extends from the formal treatise to the floating criticism of everyday conversation on literary topics. It takes in creative literature: such a work as Ben Jonson's *Poetaster*, or the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, or even the *Meistersinger* of Wagner, will display in creative form literature discussing literature.

From this broad field we may however mark off certain kinds of critical discussion that lie outside our present purpose. Textual criticism, it has already been pointed out, belongs to the outer literary study: its affiliations are with literary history and bibliography. In the same category may be placed what is known at the present time as the higher criticism of the Bible: its problems are distinctly historical, and not literary problems. There is another kind of discussion, highly germane to literary study, which might be called the art criticism of literature. But the treatment proper for this seems to separate it from the criticism with which we are immediately concerned; it deals with the elements that go to make literature taken apart from the particular works in which they appear. Such analysis will find a place in the Sixth Book of the present work as the Grammar of Literary Art.

Coming to literary criticism in the more limited and usual sense of the term, we are to see how this is affected by recognition of the unity of all literature, and by the emphasis which modern thought places upon evolution and inductive observation. In accordance with the general plan of this work I present in Chart XIX (page 222), at a single view and in

CHART XIX

Literary Criticism Traditional and Modern

Traditional Criticism

understands **CRITICISM** as a mode of judgment:

(1) As a starting-point literary practice is formulated into theory by Aristotle from the single literature of the Greeks

(2) At the Renaissance this Aristotelian criticism is misunderstood as a binding norm for all literature—coming thus into collision with tendencies of mediaeval and modern poetry

(3) Criticism so constituted (*a*) ignores the unity of literature; (*b*) ignores natural literary evolution; (*c*) tends to crowd out inductive observation of literature by preoccupation with theory and literary valuations

understands **TASTE** (the name for the faculty of appreciation) in a static sense: the application to literature of assumed theory and standards of value

The result is **CRITICAL CONFUSION:** The History of Criticism (since the Renaissance) appears a mass of contradictory positions—with a tendency toward the triumph of creative literature over criticism

Modern Criticism

enlarges to **WORLD LITERATURE** the field in which literary practice is to be formulated

enlarges the conception of **CRITICISM,** discriminating four distinct types:

(1) Inductive Criticism: examination of particular literature as it stands, with a view to interpretation and evolutionary classification—this the necessary basis of the other types

(2) Speculative Criticism: working toward theory and philosophy of literature

(3) Judicial Criticism: the application of assumed principles to the assaying of particular literature—criticism thus controlling production

(4) Free or Subjective Criticism: critical writings treated as independent literature, a revelation of the critic as author

enlarges the conception of **TASTE** as either

Static: with assumed standards and theory: or

Evolutionary: the Wordsworthian principle, that each variety of literature creates its own variety of taste

tabular form, the contrast between traditional and modern criticism.

Traditional criticism has conceived of criticism as a mode of judgment: as pronouncements upon points of literary theory, comparisons of literary merit and value, estimates of correctness and incorrectness. The word 'criticism,' which etymologically need mean nothing more than the noting of distinctions, has been specialized to distinctions of better and worse; in modern parlance to 'criticize' a person means not to approve of him, and the adjective 'critical' is almost a synonym for 'censorious.' It is not difficult to see how this has come about.[1] The formal study of literature begins with the *Poetics* of Aristotle, a work in which Aristotle, with the highest authority and skill, is seeking to formulate literary practice. But as a Greek, to whom all the rest of the world were barbarians, Aristotle founds his survey exclusively upon the single literature of the Greeks. At the Renaissance this Aristotelian criticism is misunderstood: it is taken to be a norm binding upon universal literature. At once criticism has become judgment. It comes into collision with notable tendencies of creative literature in the mediaeval and modern world. The conflict thus generated makes the staple of critical discussions from the Renaissance to the present time.

From our present point of view the criticism so constituted is seen, in the first place, to have ignored the unity of literature, by drawing its literary conceptions from the productions of a single school. It has at the same time set itself against the natural evolution of literature, which under conditions so diverse as those of ancient Greece, of the Middle Ages, of modern times, must inevitably produce varieties of literature fundamentally different. Description of literary productions as they actually are could, of course, never wholly cease: but under

[1] With all this compare chapter xiv.

the conditions indicated such inductive observation of literature tends to be crowded out by preoccupation with questions of theory and literary valuation. If we take the word 'taste' as, on the whole, the best word to express the appreciative faculty, this taste has, in traditional criticism, been understood solely in a static sense: it has meant the application to literary works of fixed theory and fixed standards of value.

The result has been a critical chaos.[1] In no field of thought can be found any considerable body of discussion which presents such a mass of inconsistencies, contradictory positions, advancing and retreating argument, as in the history of literary criticism since the Renaissance. The paradoxes of criticism have come to be enrolled among the curiosities of literature.

Perhaps the nearest approach to agreement among estimators of literary excellence is found in the tendency at the present time to recognize the supreme greatness of Shakespeare. But Shakespeare has won his reputation in the teeth of critical opposition: Shakespeare criticism has been a series of retreating attacks. To one generation Shakespeare only makes an occasion for abusive language. Voltaire finds his poetry "the fruit of the imagination of an intoxicated savage." Rymer, reluctantly recognizing some comic merit in *Othello*, pronounces the tragic part of that play "a bloody farce without salt or savor." Another generation finds the Shakespearean drama remarkable, but hopelessly illegitimate; and Dryden unites with lesser persons in reconstructing Shakespeare's plays for him. Yet again, Shakespeare is made a compound of the highest excellences with as many defects; Dr. Johnson scores these faults as unhestitatingly as if he were dealing with school exercises. A later period treats Shakespeare as the revealing

[1] On this general subject compare my *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 7–21; E. S. Dallas' *Gay Science;* Isaac d'Israeli's *Curiosities of Literature* (Routledge), article "Sketches of Criticism"; Mr. Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* (Dodd), *passim*, more especially interchapters iv, v, vi.

genius of a type of poetry; seeking to do for Shakespeare just what Aristotle does for Greek tragedy and epic. It is the same with the other great masters. Rymer speaks of the *Paradise Lost* as "what some are pleased to call a poem"; Addison laboriously shows that Milton has the same qualities as the poetry of Homer and Virgil. Spenser's *Faerie Queene* is found by some critics all out of drawing; the Spenserian stanza—the delight of modern metrical critics—is by the age of the heroic couplet pronounced unworthy of consideration. Wordsworth has to run the gauntlet of reviewing abuse—"glorious delirium," "incoherent rapture," "low and maudlin imbecility"—before he is allowed to take his enduring place as a great master. Pope, equally prominent in poetry and in criticism, regards the Rymer of the above pronouncements as one of the best critics England has ever had; critics of the rank of Macaulay and Saintsbury, agreeing in little else, agree that Rymer is the worst critic who ever lived.[1] Dr. Johnson, literary dictator of his time, falls foul of Milton's *Lycidas:* "Its diction is harsh, its rhymes uncertain, its numbers unpleasing; . . . . in this poem there is no nature for there is no truth, there is no art for there is nothing new; . . . . it is easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting." In our own time Mark Pattison pronounces this same *Lycidas* the "culminating point in the development of Miltonic genius . . . . the high-water mark of English poesy."[2]

Literary theory makes in this course of critical history no better show than literary valuations. The three unities as formulated by Aristotle are for a long time made the indispensable condition of dramatic writing; gradually they lose their authority, and finally it is discovered that Aristotle never

[1] Saintsbury's *History of Criticism,* II, 391–97; for Macaulay, "Essay on Boswell's Johnson."

[2] M. Pattison's *Milton* in Men of Letters Series (Macmillan), chapter ii.

formulated them. Blank verse—as distinguished from rhyme—is at one important moment declared impossible for English poetry, unless drama be taken as a semi-poetry that may admit it; this does not prevent blank verse from becoming the dominant English meter. The general belief in literary theory is for a long time so firmly established that to compose according to theory is made the same thing as to compose well; later on theorizing is regarded as the great bane of creative literature; and so the "law of writ and the liberty" fluctuate in criticism as regularly as political parties go into government and opposition.

These startling critical pronouncements cannot be excused as the slips or infelicities of criticism, for it is from the greatest names in literary history that they come. Nor can we deal with the vagaries of traditional criticism, in the way a good Catholic might deal with the 'variations' of Protestantism, by declaring criticism a vicious thing. Mr. Saintsbury, who, more than any other man, has gone through and through the whole history of critical discussion, continually breaks off to tell us that criticism is the most delightful of occupations; and the general world of culture seems to support this view, by its practice of devoting ten hours to the reading of reviews for every single hour it devotes to the literature itself. We cannot even take refuge in the suggestion that criticism, otherwise excellent, is a lawless thing. For there is an approach to something like a law underlying fluctuations of literary judgments; and this law is the continuous triumph of creative literature over the criticism that has opposed it. Traditional criticism is a thing of confusion because its foundation has been built upon the sand.

Modern criticism may follow Aristotle in the formulation of literary practice into literary theory; but it must begin by enlarging to the whole extent of world literature the field in which the literature is to be surveyed. If we go no farther than a

single enlargement, it is interesting to think how different a system of poetics we might have received if Aristotle had had before him the literature we call the Bible. The two ancestral literatures of modern culture are the supplements the one of the other. Greek drama is throughout its course dominated by theatrical performance; the ancient Hebrews had no theater, and dramatic form makes itself felt in the Bible by permeating other literary types.[1] Greek epic has a subject-matter and a verse medium of its own; Biblical epic follows the general course of national history, and is attracted to historic prose.[2] Greek philosophy, almost from the beginning, is identified with analysis and the literature of prose; Biblical philosophy remains in the earlier stage of wisdom, and can add the whole range of creative literature to prose discussion.[3] The Greek language is so constituted that its prose and its verse are widely sundered; the Hebrew language rests its verse system upon a parallelism that also belongs to prose, creating thus an elastic medium of expression that can reflect the most subtle fluctuations of emotion.[4] Perhaps there is no single cause from which our current criticism has suffered more than from neglect of the literary study of the Bible.

But modern criticism must also enlarge its conception of criticism itself, and discriminate four different types. We have in the first place, Inductive criticism: the examination of a particular piece of literature as it stands, with a view to interpretation and evolutionary classification. This is the indispensable basis for all other kinds of criticism. Of course, a critic of the judicial temperament would admit that, if he had failed to understand or had misinterpreted the literature he

[1] Compare *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 108–9, 185 ff., 423, and chapter xviii.

[2] *Literary Study of the Bible*, page 227, and chapter ix.

[3] *Ibid.*, page 289, and chapter xiii.

[4] *Ibid.*, pages 113 ff.

had been treating, his valuation or theory would fall to the ground. What he might perhaps fail to see is that such pure interpretation becomes possible only by a process from which the idea of judging has been wholly excluded. We have, in the second place, Speculative criticism, working toward a theory or philosophy of literature. There is ample room, in the third place, for the Judicial criticism which is the application of accepted principles to particular pieces of literature. Yet a fourth type arises when literary criticism, of any kind, is treated as itself independent literature, revealing the critic as author. What may prove inadmissible as an item of theory may nevertheless by its literary execution have high interest and value. Some will hold that this Free or Subjective criticism is the most important criticism of all. These four types of criticism, however they may mingle in a particular discussion, are in function clearly distinct. Traditional criticism was the unconscious arrogation of the whole field of criticism by a single one of these four types: the idea of criticism was narrowed to the idea of judgment, and no place was left for the interpretation from which the judicial attitude must be excluded.

As modern study enlarges the field of literary survey, and the meaning it attaches to the word 'criticism,' so it enlarges our conception of the appreciative faculty, or 'taste.' The wide-reaching antithesis of static and evolutionary applies here also: side by side with judgment by fixed standards we have an evolutionary conception according to which every variety of literature, in the natural course of things, generates its own variety of appreciation.

I propose in what follows to discuss separately each of the four types of criticism, and to begin with Speculative criticism. It might seem as if the criticism of Interpretation should have a logical priority, as the basis of all the rest. But the logical order is not always the best order of exposition; and there is an advantage on the other side in the consideration that Speculative

criticism deals with general conceptions of which the other kinds of criticism are the application. The three chapters which immediately follow will be devoted to Speculative criticism and the criticism of Interpretation. A fourth chapter will be upon the History of Critical Opinion; this will be a prelude to chapters on Judicial and Subjective criticism. I shall conclude with a few words upon the Position of Criticism in the Study of Literature as a whole.

CHAPTER XI

SPECULATIVE CRITICISM.—THE FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTION AND FUNCTION OF POETRY

The subject on which we are now entering is what has usually been designated as the philosophy of literature. I have preferred to speak of speculative criticism. I cannot see that there is any body of widely systematized thought obtaining sufficient general acceptance to constitute a philosophy of literature. The word 'speculative' suggests a tentative and temporary stage of advance toward such a philosophy. It lends itself to both of the modes in which men philosophize—a priori reasoning and induction; these in the tentative stage may well move together, like physiology kept side by side with clinics. Instead of seeking final definitions, the philosophy founded on which must stand or fall with the definition, we may advance speculative positions: tentative principles, not mutually exclusive, claiming what validity each may appear to have without prejudice to other principles that may be enunciated in the future. From the inductive point of view these will be working hypotheses. And a special service that may be rendered by criticism in the speculative stage is to make prominent the leading issues of literary philosophy, thus blazing trails by which the student may guide himself amid the tangle of conflicting opinions.

One such leading issue in criticism is the subject of the present chapter—the fundamental conception and function of poetry. In dealing with this, not the least of our difficulties will be to keep the discussion well within the bounds of literary theory, with as little divergence as may be into the outlying regions of psychology and aesthetics. Early treatments of the subject appeared before the provinces of study were clearly differ-

entiated. The *Poetics* of Aristotle is at once philosophy of literature, practical treatise on rhetoric, and (incidentally) a system of elementary grammar. Aristotle not only constructs literary theory, but formulates it in harmony with the prevailing philosophy of ideas. At a very different epoch Addison founds his literary theory upon the faculty of the imagination:[1] but he is impelled to discuss—at great length—how this faculty works, the discussion reflecting the reigning philosophy of Descartes and the reigning psychology of Locke, to say nothing of indiscriminate reflections natural to the elegant essayist and the religious thinker of the eighteenth century. The desideratum is a literary theory resting as far as may be on the literature it is intended to explain, and as little as possible entangled with successive stages of the aesthetic sciences.

At the outset we may notice a way of looking at literature, and especially poetry, which perhaps has never been regularly formulated, but which nevertheless has wide prevalence, especially at the present time. It may roughly be summed up thus. (1) In literature considered as literature the matter is little or nothing: the manner is almost everything. (2) This manner of literature consists very largely in phrase and diction; in such things as the grand style and *nuances* of expression. The free play of individual treatment is the point to emphasize, and theorizing should be discredited. (3) Where the question is of poetry, the main factor is rhythm and verse, and all that is traditionally known as the "poet's numbers."

I believe this is a false position: at the same time it appears to be a misreading of literary principles which are both true and important.

1. Every possible kind of subject-matter—good and bad, high and low, trivial and weighty, novel and familiar, morally sound and unsound—can constitute, and has been made to constitute, the *raw material* for poetry of the highest order. Vice

[1] *Spectator*, Nos. 411–21.

and crime are the natural food for tragedy; the weaknesses and meannesses of men are similarly the natural food for comic art; the most fleeting trivialities of social intercourse are the material out of which humor is constructed. Without pain and suffering there could be no pathos; without ugliness art would lose its effect of the grotesque. No poetry can be higher than the poetry of Dante and Milton: the masterpieces of these poets are pictures of hell and delineation of an archfiend. In this sense it may be said that in poetry the subject is of little moment, the manner of treatment is all-important.

2. But when we come to examine this manner of treatment in poetry, we find that it is a manner which largely affects the matter: which modifies, purifies, transforms it. Failure to give attention to the matter of poetry thus artistically recast, through absorption in the interest of the expression, is a loss to literary study of serious importance. And, instead of there being opposition between individual treatment and literary theorizing, the freedom of individual treatment is itself a great part of the theory.

3. The contention that metrical considerations are the dominant factor in poetry is the reappearance of what at the commencement of this work was described as a fundamental misconception which, more than any other single cause, has brought literary study into confusion.[1] This misconception rests upon the ambiguity of the word 'prose,' which has unconsciously led to the identification of poetry with verse. I have maintained that the fundamental distinction in literature is the distinction between creative literature and the literature that is not creative; that the words 'poetry' and 'fiction,' both by etymology and by early usage, are the proper terms to designate the literature that is creative; that the distinction of verse and prose belongs to an entirely different order of thought. The origin of the misunderstanding is easily explained. By the

[1] Chapter I, pages 13–17, especially footnote to page 17.

regular order of things verse for a long period dominates all literature, and prose appears late; accordingly the early poems of the Greeks, which gave our world its first conception of great poetry, were poems in verse, and caused a natural association of meter with poetry. A wider survey of literature shows that, while the great bulk of ancient poetry was in verse, the greater part of modern poetry (creative literature) is in prose; and that such supreme poetry as that of Shakespeare expresses itself in rapid transitions from verse to prose and prose to verse, these transitions producing just the dramatic effects which in Greek drama are produced by transition between different kinds of verse.[1] A wide survey of literature shows further that, while verse and prose in Greek are entirely unlike one another, in other literatures verse and prose shade into one another until the two can overlap. If the question is to be decided upon authority, the great names of Aristotle, Bacon, Sidney, Ben Jonson, Shelley, and Wordsworth may weigh against the large number of critics who have stood for the other view. Moreover, this opposition view that makes verse a necessity of poetry is itself a position not entirely without foundation. The element of soundness in it is this: that, where poetry (creative literature) expresses itself in verse, it is both possible and probable that the metrical form will react to some extent upon the creative matter; we shall thus have poetry in verse and poetry in prose as two species of poetry. It is one thing to discriminate the species: quite another thing to make this discrimination the same as the difference between poetry and what is not poetry. The usage of the terms is in hopeless confusion that no skill can harmonize; it is however open to us to adopt a usage that is in harmony with fundamental principles. Not to do this involves us in absurdities. We must on such a theory pronounce that, while Lucretius' great work is poetry of the highest order, the epoch-making translation of it by Munro is

[1] Compare below, chapter xxvi, pages 479–86.

not poetry at all, yet comparatively unimportant metrical translations of it are to be considered poetry. In the same spirit we must decline to recognize Shakespeare's *Tempest* as a poem: we must say that it commences to be a poem at line 57, and ceases to be a poem at line 68; becomes a poem again in the second scene; wavers between poetry and not poetry in the early part of Act II; ceases to be a poem at line 18 of the second scene of that act—and so on. Or we can escape this absurdity only by the greater absurdity of laying down that drama—which to the Greeks was the most concentrated of all kinds of poetry—is not poetry at all, but an amphibious thing which may not be classified as either poetry or prose.

This digression has taken us into the very heart of the question we have before us—the relation of poetry to its subject-matter. Or we may put it, the relation of poetry to reality: for it is clear that poetry does not deal with x, y, z—abstractions kept clear of the concrete. So far as appears on the surface, poetry has to do with just such persons and incidents and experiences and sentiments as we have in the real world around us. The question becomes, Is this surface impression correct? or has reality become modified as it has been worked up into art?

The question emerges in the earliest discussions of literature. Speculative criticism makes its first important appearance in the imaginary dialogues of Plato. A much-quoted passage of Plato[1] represents Socrates as excluding Homer from his ideal state on the express ground that the poems give us incidents and ideas which, if we encountered them in real life, would be unwholesome. In another passage, where the undercurrent of thought is the philosophy of ideas—the notion that what we call reality is only a copy of eternal ideas—objection is made to poetry and the arts that these are only a copy of the copy.[2] In fact, "the imitative art is completely divorced from truth."

[1] *Republic*, Book X, sections 598–99.

[2] *Republic*, Book X, *passim*, especially section 597.

If this train of reasoning is correct, then poetry is only a special form of philosophy: the criteria to be applied to the content of a poem are the same as the criteria applied to reality. Aristotle, on the other hand, bases his theory of poetry on its contrast to such a thing as history in its relation to reality and fact.

> The poet and the historian differ not by writing in verse or prose. The work of Herodotus might be put into verse, and it would still be a species of history, with meter no less than without it. The true difference is that one relates what has happened, the other what may happen. Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages. The particular is—for example—what Alcibiades did or suffered.[1]

Such passages as these not only raise the question we have before us, but also give us one hint toward its solution. It appears that poetry does not stand alone as regards relation to reality: what we call the fine arts are in the same category, or at least raise the same questions. We must not assume that there is no difference between poetry and the other arts; but we are entitled, in considering the relation of poetry to reality, to get what light we can from viewing the fine arts as a whole. Is poetry a mode of philosophy or a mode of art?

It is remarkable how the traditional discussion of this question has been made to hang upon a single word—the Greek word *mimesis*, of which the traditional translation is *imitation*. Yet it is at least doubtful whether the spirit of these words is not altogether different. The connotation of the word *imitation* is positive: it suggests resemblance to reality. It is a question whether the word *mimesis* has not also a negative connotation, suggesting what is *other than reality*. At the back of the abstract term *mimesis* is the common noun *mimus*, the ordinary

[1] *Poetics*, chapter ix.

Greek word for an actor or spectacular entertainer. Thus to the Greek mind the presentive idea in all this class of words would be the dramatic or spectacular entertainment. Now, the root idea of such spectacular entertainment is acting, pretending, making yourself other than you are: all that children mean by their expressive word *make-believe*. If we look at the spirit of this make-believe, we see that it may be effective by close resemblance to life, or equally effective by being refreshingly unlike real life. The word *creative* has just this neutral suggestiveness; and this is the same idea which is found to underlie the words *poet* and *poetry*. In creative exhibitions we have character-painting that seeks to get close to actual life, and caricature which seeks to get as far away as possible; one plot tells by its probability, the plot of an extravaganza or farce is an outrageous violation of probability. Reasons may be assigned for preferring one or other of these types: but they are all alike varieties of creation. If such a word as 'creation,' instead of 'imitation,' had been made the basic idea for the discussion of poetry and art, criticism might have been saved from many of the false scents upon which it has opened.[1]

Many different views have been put forward, and have found acceptance, as to the way in which reality becomes modified in its appearance as art.[2] We shall be safe in taking the

[1] The tenor of the argument refers to the traditional use of "imitation" as a basic idea of poetry. As to the use of the word in the text of Aristotle's *Poetics*, each passage must be determined by its context, it being always remembered that the Greek word has this double connotation. In Mr. Butcher's edition of the *Poetics*, the chapter on "Imitation as an Aesthetic Term" is valuable.

[2] As I am here discussing general theory, and in no sense giving a history of speculation, I shall rarely refer to authorities. For those who desire principles rather than detailed history, I especially recommend W. B. Worsfold's *Principles of Criticism* (Longmans), a work to which, once for all, I express my own great indebtedness. For fuller history: Professor Saintsbury's monumental *History of Criticism* in three volumes (Dodd, Mead & Co.), especially its valuable "interchapters," and Gayley and Scott's *Introduction to the Methods and Materials of Literary Criticism* (Ginn) are highly serviceable.

position that *poetry and art are a many-sided modification and extension of reality.* I shall proceed, in the manner indicated at the commencement of this chapter, to formulate four principles: they are not to be understood as mutually exclusive, but each will have its own validity as explaining the phenomena of poetry and art.

I

Poetry and the arts are a representation of reality in some special medium: the different media of the different arts in themselves constitute a modification of reality.

The medium of painting may be described as surface form, mass, and color; of sculpture, form in three dimensions and substance; of music, rhythm and tone and timbre; of dancing, figures in motion. To make art, some real thing, or some addition to the things of reality, must be translated into one of these or similar media. The anchor of a ship is not a thing of art: but an anchor cast in gold or carved in cocoanut is art. A familiar face is not art, but its portrait is; and the art is different according as the portrait is cast in bronze, or cut in marble, or painted in oils or water colors. The cry of a bird is not a thing of art: but when a succession of sounds, by no means identical with the sounds of the bird's cry, but suitable to some musical instrument, and forming a part of some musical progression, suggests the thought of a bird, such representation becomes art. In each case there is no art unless the mind recognizes in what is before it a representation and not a reality. Thus art excludes illusion.

A certain painter having painted a picture of fruit in such wise that the birds came and pecked at it, his rival undertook to surpass this feat. When the day appointed for the trial was come, all being assembled, the painter bade his rival draw aside the curtain and show the wonderful picture. Now, what the painter called a curtain was

in truth the picture itself: wherefore his rival laughed, and claimed the victory; for, said he, You indeed deceived silly birds, but I have deceived a great painter.

The answer to this riddle is that neither painter was better than the other, but both feats were equally outside art; an exhibition which so deceives the beholder that he does not recognize a representation of something is as far from art as are the clever tricks of a juggler. It appears, moreover, that the different arts modify reality differently in their representations of it. An oil painting of a farmyard would show the trees and cows and grass with approximation to the color of these things in the real world. But if a silver cream jug were sculptured with a farmyard scene the trees and cows and grass would all appear of the same silver color. No one would object to the art of the cream jug on the ground that cows similar in color to leaves are not to be found in nature; the mind without difficulty discriminates between differences which are to be understood of the thing represented and differences which belong to the medium of representation.

From this point of view we must inquire, What is the medium for the art of poetry? The only adequate answer is, Language with the thought it conveys. We must not stop short with language. Words are no more the medium of poetry than brush-strokes are the medium of painting. A Greek ode, with its antistrophic correspondences, declaimed before an audience that did not know Greek, might well produce an artistic impression, but the art would be that of language, not of poetry. An imperfect idea of the poetic medium has led to mistakes of criticism. The *Laocoon* of Lessing[1] is a very valuable treatise: but at one point the author is led by this cause into error. The whole work has started from an interest-

[1] Translated by Beasley (Bohn). The reference is especially to chapters xv and xvi.

ing comparison between a piece of sculpture, representing the death of Laocoon, and a description of the same incident in the poetry of Virgil. As the discussion widens to the general distinction between the branches of art, it lays stress on the fact that in painting or sculpture we see all the different parts of the whole together side by side; in the poetic description the elements of the incident come to us successively one after another; the conclusion seems to be that the medium of painting or sculpture differs from the medium of poetry as juxtaposition differs from progression. But the argument ignores an elementary psychologic fact as to the mode in which language leads to thought. While the different parts of a complex thought are being presented to the attention, they are held in suspense until, when they are complete, the mind automatically and in a single moment combines them into a whole; just as the elements of a chemical compound might lie for a long time side by side until some electric shock transforms the whole in a moment into a new substance. A reader of Browning may have to keep his mind in a state of receptive passivity for a couple of pages before the long-expected finite verb comes to convert the two pages into a single thought: had the finite verb been different the whole thought would have been different. So it is at the conclusion of a poet's long description that the consecutive details are resolved into a unity of coexistence: the poem, as much as the sculpture, presents the elements of the incident in juxtaposition.

What we are dealing with is not a psychological refinement, but a matter of great practical importance in the study of literature. For not one but many readings of a poem may be necessary before it is grasped as an artistic whole. True, with the first reading elements will have combined into a unity; but if—from unfamiliarity or other cause—some of the component parts have failed to rivet the attention, the resulting impression may be different in kind from the true one. Leave

out even a single element of a chemical combination, and either no combination takes place, or the result may be a totally different compound. We listen to a symphony of Beethoven, made out of musical elements that are familiar, and we have a clear impression of the whole. We listen to a modern symphony, which introduces novel harmonies and progressions, and at the end we have no impression at all; with a third or fourth hearing the novel elements have been assimilated, and the symphony of Strauss seems as clear as the symphony of Beethoven, though more complex. Obvious as all this is, I believe the neglect of such considerations has seriously affected both the general reader of poetry and the professed critic. It is a common complaint that popular readers take out of circulating libraries hardly anything but works of fiction. I should say that they could hardly make a better choice, if only these novels were really read. But in novel reading a main interest is curiosity as to the ending of the story: while this lasts other elements of the fiction are overlooked. In a second reading there can be no curiosity, and other artistic impressions have a chance. Three or four readings may be required for a novel of considerable length. Or again, it is remarkable how many writers of undoubted authority have pronounced the Second Part of Goethe's *Faust* a failure. I wish they could be compelled to tell us on oath how many times they have read it. For myself, I will confess that when I first read that work it seemed to me a labored chaos. This is natural enough: as I have shown elsewhere,[1] the application of the germinal story of Faust to so vast a thing as modern culture involves an infinite intricacy of matters to be brought into combination. With multiplied readings, the whole *Faust* poem of Goethe presents itself to my mind as a consummate masterpiece: equally impressive in the separate parts and in the harmony of design into which they are brought. I would go so far as to lay down

[1] *World Literature*, chapter v.

that the most important postulate of literary study is the repeated readings of poetry.

II

Poetry and art are a selection of reality: the selection may be (a) *of the nature of elimination and purification; or* (b) *it may be selection for a particular purpose, such as pleasure, or* (c) *for the negation of particular purposes, the play-impulse.*

The word 'selection' in this formula does not mean that out of the infinite variety of things about us art selects some things and not others; the meaning is that any thing of reality in becoming art undergoes some sort of selective process. This selective process may be of the nature of elimination or purification. The idea has been excellently expressed in metaphorical language, by saying that the reality is 'filtered' or 'deodorized' in passing through the mind of the artist.[1] This at once explains one of the great paradoxes of art: that disagreeable or unimportant reality can make agreeable and transcendent art. An audience in a theater, enjoying to the full the histrionic art of a tragic situation, becomes suddenly aware—such things are said to have happened—that the particular actor before them has taken advantage of the imaginary situation actually to stab a rival actor whom he hates: in an instant art satisfaction is transformed into horror and disgust. The drama had eliminated some element which the particular actor has brought back. Of course, a case like this might to some extent come under our first principle: the audience retained their sense of art as long as they took what was before them for a representation and not a reality. But this will not explain why, with all the world to choose from, art feels a special attraction for what is farthest from beauty: where the raw material is most unpromising the triumph of purification is the greater. From

[1] Worsfold, pages 93, 111.

this point of view, again, we see how a faithful portrait can yet be more beautiful than the original; how a portrait in oils can, by the skill of the artist in suggesting various moods of the sitter, surpass the comparatively mechanical photograph that is limited to a single impression. In this connection perhaps we can best understand the conception of art idealization that reigns in Aristotle and other Greek critics.[1] With their underlying thought that reality is an imperfect representation of eternal ideas, they see in art this reality purified of its particulars and brought nearer to the generalization, purified of imperfections and brought nearer to the idea.

Or, the selection may be for some particular purpose, such as 'pleasure'; or again, for that negation of all particular purposes which has been called the 'play-impulse.' A muscular or mental effort directed to some special purpose is work, or perhaps exercise: a similar effort that has no ulterior purpose, but is pursued as an end in itself, is sport or play. There is certainly something attractive in this last suggestion:

Maxim.—Art is real life at play.

But a large number of writers, from Aristotle[2] to Mr. Courthope,[3] have insisted strongly upon pleasure as a necessary element in the conception of poetry and art. To me, the suggestion seems to raise more difficulties than it solves. We are impelled to ask many questions. Is the meaning any kind of pleasure? Is poetry merely an entertainment, to be judged by its success in entertaining? Some such idea seems to be affected by Sir Walter Scott, when, in prefaces to Waverley Novels,[4] he will describe what his intention has been, and how a dense pub-

[1] Chapters x and xi of Butcher's edition of the *Poetics* are valuable in this connection.

[2] Compare chapter iv of Butcher's edition.

[3] *Life in Poetry, Law in Taste* (Macmillan).

[4] Compare Introduction (of 1830) to *The Monastery*.

lic (so it seems to us) has completely missed it, and how accordingly he will not do it again. This hardly seems satisfactory, and comes perilously near what the candidate is supposed to say to the electors: These, gentlemen, are my political principles, but if they are not satisfactory they can be changed. Are we to side with the large number of people who can find no pleasure in a story that has not a happy ending? or are we to say with the poet,

Be our joys three parts pain,

and so justify tragedy? Is the pleasure the pleasure of people in general today, or of a future generation that may come round to the point of view of the artist? If we seek in any way to qualify the word 'pleasure,' the proposition begins to lose its significance. If, with Addison, we prescribe "enduring pleasures of the imagination," we have introduced a new factor into the discussion, and made the imagination the criterion of art. If we try to specify what kind of pleasure is to be understood, we soon get down to an identical proposition—that art is the selection of reality for art satisfaction. There is however one virtue in such a suggestion as the one we have been considering—that it brings in the reader or hearer of poetry. However we may formulate the modification of reality that is to constitute art, it is a modification that must take in the percipient of art as well as the creative artist.

III

Poetry and art are an arrangement of reality: the modification of reality consists in the relativity of the details in the work of art.

A conception of constant recurrence in discussions of art is expressed by the phrase *unity in diversity*. To make an impression of art there must be variety enough to rouse interest, together with the comprehension of all the parts in a sense of unity. We are led directly to the foundation step in art analysis

—the division into human interest and design: the human interest of the matter, the design of the composition or plot. There must be no matter outside the design; everything must be present that is required to make the design intelligible. And a detail that is superfluous is a detail that is inartistic. There will be no art in what presents itself as a single point; nor in such a succession of details as a chronicle history, which reveals no mutual connection of the events. Hamlet is made to speak of the drama as "holding up the mirror to nature": the context may justify Hamlet's image, yet the idea of reflection as applied to art is dangerously misleading. A landscape reflected in a mirror is not a picture, for there is no composition. The reader's household life exactly imitated by actors on a stage would not be drama, for it would have no plot.

Maxim.—In art no detail liveth to itself.

Here we have a tangible criterion for the difference between reality and art. In nature and real life details have independent existence in themselves; in a work of art the *raison d'être* of each detail is its connection with all the rest. An artist is painting a portrait with his eye upon the sitter; it is suggested (say) that the hair hanging over the brow is too heavy; the artist corrects this defect—how? Not necessarily by doing anything to the hair, but by blackening the background, upon which the hair seems to lift itself from the forehead. Relational significance of all that appears is what constitutes art.

This principle, even more than the last, lays emphasis upon the percipient of art. An arranged spectacle implies a spectator; perspective is perspective only from a given point of view. A painting hung in one place is a work of art; if it be hung in another place there is no art, for all is seen out of focus. What is true of the painting applies to the more complex art of poetry. The audience in the theater fixes the viewpoint for the unity of design we call plot, and for the distinctions of serious and comic

which we call tone. If we describe Dogberry and Verges as comic, it is because they are comic to the spectator: in the story itself Dogberry and Verges take themselves with ponderous seriousness. I would not dwell upon a point so obvious were it not that so much of criticism is invalidated by neglect of these considerations. Many people are attracted to Shakespeare by his grasp of human life: this element they study seriously, but they have no use for such technicalities as plot and tone. Unfortunately, it is only by attention to these that the content of the play can be correctly interpreted. What is to be called the life presented in a drama is, not what happens in the scenes, but these happenings arranged so as to produce specific effects. We turn at one point to the stage, and what presents itself is men grappling with one another in deadly struggle, and women bemoaning the sight—we see rage and agony; we turn round and look at the audience, and find everyone laughing at a comic situation. To say that the scene means rage and agony is plain misinterpretation: it means rage and agony so arranged as to seem ludicrous. As I have elsewhere shown at length, the plots of Shakespeare's plays, with the variations of tone that are part of the plots, are the sole key to the underlying philosophy of life.[1]

IV[2]

Poetry and art are an independent interpretation of reality: the reaction of reality upon the creative faculty, as science is the reaction of reality upon the rationalizing faculty.

So far we have spoken of reality as if it were a simple thing needing no explanation. But what we call reality is itself an

[1] Compare Introduction to my *Shakespeare as Thinker*, pages 5–10: the whole book is an expansion of this idea. Compare also below, chapter xviii, pages 350–55.

[2] In this part of the work I would express a general obligation to the writings of Dr. J. C. Shairp, more especially to his *Poetic Interpretation of Nature* (Houghton).

interpretation. Perhaps there is nothing in the world around us which seems so positive as light and sound. But science pronounces light to be the reaction of ether waves upon the optical sense; sound to be the reaction of waves of air upon the auditory nerve. If all sentient things, animal and human, could suddenly cease to be, the universe would be plunged in darkness and silence. The ether waves would undulate as before, but there would be no optical sense upon which they could react to produce light; the tide, in the absence of ears to hear, would no longer thunder upon the beach, it would simply tumble. The reasoning processes by which science so interprets reality we may sum up as the rationalizing faculty. The principle just enunciated assumes a distinct creative faculty as the basis for art, corresponding to the rationalizing faculty which is the basis for science: the art which this creative faculty produces is an independent interpretation of reality.

Several points in the above proposition need attention, and we may commence with the word 'faculty.' The case for a special faculty as the basis of art is strengthened by the consideration that we can recognize similar special faculties in other regions of thought. We may assume faith—the instinct of the spiritual—as the basis of religion; a moral sense as the basis of morality. These special faculties—it is hardly necessary to say—are not assumed as psychological ultimates, incapable of further analysis, but simply as points of departure for their respective spheres of thought. The psychological analysis of them belongs to psychology, not to criticism. No psychological analysis of such a faculty can affect the exercise of the faculty when formed, just as no theory respecting the origin of our powers of perception can determine what we shall perceive. Such special faculties are of course developed by exercise, and impaired by neglect; they may be rudimentary, or altogether lacking, in individuals; all of them are less widely distributed than the rationalizing faculty that is the basis of science. Each

is valid only for its own special sphere: experiences of color-blindness have no relevancy to those who have an eye for colors.

Addison is one of those who have thought on these lines, and he makes the faculty of imagination the basis of art. He writes:

> A Poet should take as much pains in forming his Imagination as a Philosopher in cultivating his Understanding.[1]
>
> . . . . It is this Talent of affecting the Imagination that gives an Embellishment to Good Sense, and makes One Man's Composition more agreeable than another's. It sets off Writings in general, but is the very Life and highest Perfection of Poetry. . . . . It has something in it like Creation; it bestows a kind of Existence, and draws up to the Reader's View several Objects which are not to be found in Being. It makes Additions to Nature, and gives a greater Variety to God's works.[2]

'Imagination' is a very suggestive word to express the creative faculty in art; but we must beware of being led by the use of it into any detailed theory of its operation. The strength of the critical principle we are considering lies in its simply assuming a special faculty as the basis of art, and so claiming the art thus brought to us as an independent interpretation of reality.

This principle, like those that have preceded it, has application to the percipient of art as well as to the artist. We may continue the formula: *The creative faculty extends and modifies reality by a double process:*

Pure creation: of the artist

Responsive creation: of the reader or spectator.

It may be a matter of doubt whether the imagination of the spectator is a weaker form of the artist's imagination, or whether the two are different in kind: but both productive and responsive creation are involved in the conception of art. The whole

[1] *Spectator*, No. 417. [2] *Ibid.*, No. 421.

idea has been admirably expressed by Dr. Hamilton Mabie in an eloquent passage too long to be quoted except in part.[1]

> The spiritual history of men is largely a history of discovery,—the record of those fruitful moments when we come upon new things, and our ideas are swiftly or slowly expanded to include them. . . . . Literature is a continual revelation to every genuine reader; a revelation of that quality which we call art, and a revelation of that mysterious vital force which we call life. In this double disclosure literature shares with all art a function which ranges it with the greatest resources of the spirit; and the reader who has the trained vision has the constant joy of discovery. . . . . To feel freshly and deeply is not only a characteristic of the artist, but also of the reader; the first finds delight in creation, the second finds delight in discovery: between them they divide one of the greatest joys known to men.

Discrimination between this "joy of creation" and "joy of discovery" has much to do with the operation and appreciation of poetry and art. We may thus continue our formula:

Where the modification of reality effected by art is new, or revolutionary, the art may suffer the (temporary) eclipse of obscurity.

As the modification of reality becomes widely recognized, or is easily imitated, it tends to become a second nature, and the art sinks to the commonplace.

It is a lesson of experience which criticism is slow to learn that—as might be expected from the nature of things—creative artists are pioneers in beauty, while the responsive faculty lags behind, and is slow to catch up. The period of a single lifetime has seen three conspicuous examples in three different arts: the paintings of Turner, the music of Wagner, the poetry of Browning, have all passed through decades of depreciation before emerging into triumphant recognition. In the intervening period the art is in eclipse; but responsibility for the shadow

[1] *Books and Culture* (Dodd), more especially pages 54–57.

belongs to the faculty of appreciation. Hence the futility of the common remark: "The poetry of Browning is obscure; now, great poetry is never obscure." Obscurity is a thing that attaches to responsive, not to productive, creation; all great poetry has been obscure to somebody.

The converse proposition is equally important. As the modification of reality that constitutes art becomes widely recognized it tends to become itself a second nature, a sort of artificial reality; it thus fails to evoke creative response, and such art becomes commonplace. The age of Dryden and Pope elaborated a system of artistic effects which later came to be called "poetic diction." While this was fresh, it evoked such "joy of discovery" that the age lost all its taste for any poetry but its own. But this "poetic diction" is a thing easily imitated; in Macaulay's phrase, it can be learned by anyone who is capable of learning anything. The more widely prevalent it became the more it lost its power of evoking the sense of beauty, and by the time of Wordsworth it had become a mere hindrance to poetic effect. Exactly the same history is presented by the outburst of enthusiastic prose style which—as 'euphuism,' or under other names—once swept through all Europe. It is the same with melodrama: its combination of strongly marked character with strongly marked experience is the easiest of all things to imitate; it delighted Shakespeare and Victor Hugo, yet it has become a drug in the literary market. The most beautiful of flowers, if it be endowed with abnormal fertility, will assuredly become a weed.

It is one of the paradoxes of art that the multiplication of the beautiful impairs beauty. An individual artist produces an exquisite design: the design multiplied by the machinery of printing or casting passes into the region of commerce, and the products become artistically as well as financially cheap. If the design was exquisite at first, why is it not exquisite still? This is sometimes explained by a theory that bases art upon the

workman's joy in his labor: where machinery has taken the place of the workman there can be no joy. But this seems a very dubious principle on which to found a theory. It confuses two very different things: the artist's joy in his labor, and the artist's satisfaction with his art. The greatest artist will be the most fastidious; when at last this fastidiousness has reached the satisfaction of the consummate, it may be by a process far removed from joy.

> But for me, I toiled and I toiled; and fair grew my father's house;
> But writhen and foul were the hands that had made it glorious;
> And the love of women left me, and the fame of sword and shield:
> And the sun and the winds of heaven, and the fowl and the grass of the field
> Were grown as the tools of my smithy; and all the world I knew,
> And the glories that lie beyond it, and whitherward all things grew;
> And myself a little fragment amid it all I saw,
> Grim, cold-heart, and unmighty as the tempest-driven straw.

The cheapening of beauty is something which belongs to responsive not productive art. It affects things of nature. The greatest coloring power of a painter—as the painter would be the first to confess—is miserably inadequate to catch the glow of a sunset; yet these sunsets repeat themselves every few days and are not looked at, while the inadequate painting fetches its thousand guineas. A beautiful thing retains its beauty for ever: it is the appreciative sense that under the influence of familiarity wears thin, until developed by special study.

The main word in this fourth principle is, of course, the word 'interpretation.' The terms 'poetry' and 'art' include: (*a*) particular works of art; (*b*) our reflections on these; (*c*) the exercise of the creative faculty not embodied in works of art. Not works of art alone, but the criticism they evoke, constitute the art interpretation of reality. It may be that the most important element of this may lie in creative impulses that never reach concrete expression. The classic of this last thought

is the *Paracelsus* of Browning. Here—in one of the most dramatic situations ever imagined—the philosopher, whose life is one long aspiration to KNOW, is brought in contact with the poet, whose ruined life has been one long aspiration to LOVE. Never has creative interpretation in all its richness been so eloquently pictured as in the aspirations of this Aprile: how, first, he would carve in stone or cast in brass all forms of earth; each passion of man he would—

> clothe in its right form,
> Or blend with others struggling in one form,
> Or show repressed with an ungainly form;

how then, with pencil and chisel, he would create for each a sphere to be its world; how then he would speak in language—

> Now poured at once forth in a burning flow,
> Now piled up in a grand array of words;

lastly, to perfect and consummate all—

> Even as a luminous haze links star to star—

he would supply all chasms with music. But the tragedy of this particular poet is that his wealth of creative impulse has been too redundant to let him create. His mind's extent has been—

> Dazzled by shapes that filled its length with light,
> Shapes clustered there to rule thee, not obey,
> That will not wait thy summons, will not rise
> Singly, nor when thy practised eye and hand
> Can well transfer their loveliness, but crowd
> By thee for ever, bright to thy despair.

If by resolute effort he would fix a single one and let the rest go, he is—

> seduced
> By memories and regrets and passionate love
> To glance once more farewell;

or mist-like influences, faint memories of all that had charmed him so long, confuse and bear him off,

> As whirling snow-drifts blind a man who treads
> A mountain ridge, with guiding spear, through storm.

He dies broken-hearted: but the life ruined by artistic inspiration too strong for expression stands itself a part of creative interpretation.

Another word of our proposition is important: the interpretation of reality by poetry and art is an *independent* interpretation. The predicate 'true' is not more applicable to science than to art: each has a truth of its own. In Matthew Arnold's phrase, beauty is truth seen from another side. It is so with all the special spheres of thought we have seen based each on its own special faculty. Religion uses the word 'prophetic' as the counterpart to the 'poetic' in art; literature of prophecy stands distinct from literature of wisdom, being based upon prophecy as creative faith. The word 'convincing' is correctly used as a term of art criticism. Proving a spiritual conception is in the same category as proving beauty: to 'prove,' in each sphere of thought, is to evoke the special faculty upon which that sphere of thought rests. The claim of these special faculties has never been more clearly enunciated than in the principle of Holy Writ, that spiritual things are spiritually discerned.[1]

The question inevitably suggests itself: With these different interpretations of reality can there be mutual interference and clashing?

Can there, for example, be antagonism between science and art? We may confidently answer that there can be none: in interpretations founded on faculties so disparate there may be overlapping but no interference. The relation of science to art

[1] I Cor., 2:13–14.

is that science is forever producing fresh reality for art to work upon. This has been laid down by Wordsworth in magnificent words:

> The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of men are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present; he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed. . . . . If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.[1]

Can there, again, be interference between art and morality? These have again and again clashed: yet the independence of the two spheres can be clearly seen. On this question three remarks may be made.

1. The "moral indifference of art" is a phrase which shocks some people: yet it has a perfectly intelligible meaning. Suppose an opera, the story of which turns upon a martyr and the tyrant who persecutes him. It is clear that the music which interprets the tyranny of the tyrant is artistically as good as the music interpreting the heroism of the martyr. It would hardly be suggested that the music of the tyrant's part should be plentifully sown with consecutive octaves and fifths in the interest of

[1] Wordworth's *Prefaces*, pages 18–19 of George's edition (Heath).

morality. We must beware of specious maxims, such as the dictum that "if a man would write great poetry his life should itself be a poem"—the kind of sayings which Dr. Johnson parodied with his line,

> Who feeds fat oxen should himself be fat.

It would be good that the life of every man should be a poem; but theory and history alike forbid our looking to the life of a poet as measure for the quality of his work.

2. We note, however, the intrusion of morality into art in what is called didactic purpose. Where the essential appeal of a work is to moral considerations the work is a work of morality. It may resemble art, as the illustrations in scientific exposition resemble poetic similes: but the product must be examined on moral canons, art has no responsibility for it.

3. On the other hand, we have the intrusion of art into morality in such biased art creations as the English Comedy of the Restoration. This may sometimes appear as another form of didactic purpose, the purpose being corrupt. But we need not seek to deny the artistic creation, where it appears, as if art must be like Sir Guyon's sword in Spenser's poem, which in the hands of his foe refused to strike its master. The spheres of thought which are separate in conception are all united in the individual mind: if an artist wishes to use his art for evil purposes there is nothing to prevent. It is a question of individual cases. There is in Rabelais and Aristophanes ten times as much indecency as in the Restoration dramatists; yet Rabelais and Aristophanes have been held to be pure, and we have heard of the divine who would never sleep without an Aristophanes under his pillow. Where moral evil appears, the evil is the evil of the author, not the evil of the art.

Can there, finally, be antagonism between science and religion? The answer to this question lies outside the scope of the present work. But the drift of the argument suggests

how these move on parallel planes and can never meet. That in history they have again and again been in conflict is due to the most obvious of causes. The religious documents of history—the bibles of the great religions—are all compounds of science and religion; the religious inspiration must express itself in the language of its age, and the language of every age is saturated with the science of its particular time. Failures of interpretation to discriminate between the scientific and the religious elements in religious documents have produced apparent clashes between things which in essence are altogether independent.

The subject of this chapter, the fundamental conception and function of poetry, presented itself, at the commencement of the argument, in the form of an antithesis: Is poetry a mode of philosophy, or a mode of art? At the conclusion of the argument the antithesis has disappeared: poetry is both a mode of philosophy and a mode of art. It is primarily a mode of art, with its foundation in the creative faculty which is the common basis of all the arts. Thus it stands forever outside science. But philosophy is wider than science. If philosophy is fully to interpret reality, philosophy is not complete until it has included all the interpretations which reality evokes from the different faculties of our nature. And the study of literature is not complete unless it takes in the interpretation of reality which poetic art presents, as well as the artistic mode of interpreting.

CHAPTER XII

SPECULATIVE CRITICISM.—THE EVOLUTIONARY THEORY OF TASTE

The preceding chapter has considered the fundamentals of poetry; in particular, how the creative faculty, which is the basis of poetry and the arts, acts by a double process, productive and responsive creation, the poetry itself and the reader's appreciation of it. Literary criticism is concerned with both. And 'taste' seems to be the accepted term for the appreciative side of criticism.

In the critical study of taste, all other questions soon appear to be minor questions in comparison with one. This is the application to taste of the antithesis between static and evolutionary, which we have seen to affect the study of literature in so many ways. The terms express different mental habits. The static habit of mind looks at things from a more or less fixed point of view. The other mental habit inclines to view differing things as differing manifestations of an underlying process. Applied to taste, the one type of mind forms—from experience or a priori thinking—standards of what is excellent in poetry; particular literature judged by such standards will appear better or worse, correct or incorrect. The other habit of mind brings to the varied forms of actual literature a flexibility of appreciation, which seeks to interrogate each from its own point of view. Thinkers of both kinds may speak of 'evolution,' but the word will have a different meaning for each. To static taste, with its positive standards, evolution will mean improvement or degeneration. The other way of regarding literature will use 'evolution' more in accordance with the use of the word in other fields of thought. It sees literature, under the influence of individual authorship and historic surroundings, as branching out naturally into varieties different in kind; if

the words 'higher' and 'lower' are used, these mean farther from or nearer to the starting-point, just as the 'higher' or 'lower' floors of an hotel are not better or worse, but simply farther from or nearer to the ground floor. In a word, the static thinker is seeking to adjust varied types of literature to his own conceptions; in the other kind of taste the thinker is seeking to adjust his own appreciation to the material that is before him.

At this point the reader must be upon his guard against a misconception into which it is only too easy to fall. He must not think of this static and evolutionary taste as if the two were horns of a dilemma, between which sooner or later he will have to choose. Different as the two things are, there is no incompatibility between them, except of course that the two things cannot be carried on together at the same moment. To the man who has formed positive standards of excellence it still remains to consider the actual fluctuations of poetic form as an historic fact. The man whose instinct is to follow the varieties of literature with sympathetic appreciation through the whole of its past is not thereby debarred from speculating upon principles of excellence desirable for literature in the future. Only it must be said that the two kinds of taste do not stand to one another upon a footing of perfect equality. The reader who is satisfied as to what is right and wrong in art is not likely to bring much insight into his examination of fluctuations in actual poetry, so much of which examination will present itself to his mind as a calculus of errors. On the other hand, the reader who has followed the varieties of existing literature, seeking without bias to interpret each in its own light, may well find this exercise of evolutionary taste the very surest ground on which to base independent examination of what is to constitute positive literary excellence.

In our tabular Comparison of Traditional and Modern Criticism (Chart XIX, page 222) prominence was given to the

consideration that traditional criticism admits only the static conception of taste: in modern criticism the static and the evolutionary types of taste stand side by side. Traditional criticism started by erecting Classical poetry as a norm for all literature: this was the enthronement of the taste that judges by standards. Of course, this judicial criticism need not be narrow; it widened to the recognition that different standards of judgment have prevailed in different eras, but the idea of judging by standards still survived. The monopoly in traditional criticism of the static conception of taste is evidenced by the effect on the word 'criticism': traditionally, criticism means judgment; and at the present day it is a great difficulty to many people to conceive that there can be criticism apart from judging. In modern criticism judicial taste has full scope. But side by side with this an evolutionary principle of taste has won full recognition.

Chart XIX[1] describes this as the Wordsworthian principle of taste. I do not mean that Wordsworth is the inventor of the idea. In his own delineation of it Wordsworth appears to ascribe the idea to Coleridge.[2] As a matter of literary history, it would appear that the essential conception is earlier than both of these writers; that the initiation of it comes from Germany rather than from England, and that its author, if author there be, is Herder and not Coleridge. In the words of Dr. Calvin Thomas:[3]

> Herder is the real father of the historical method. It was he who first expounded, in a large and impressive way, the idea that poetry is everywhere the evolutionary product of national conditions, and

[1] See page 222.

[2] Wordsworth, "Essay Supplementary," page 87 of George's edition of Wordsworth's *Prefaces* (Heath).

[3] History of German literature in Gosse's *Literatures of the World* (Appleton), page 253.

that the criteria for judging it should be sought in that fact rather than in abstract and universal canons.

I call the principle Wordsworthian because it emerges as a recognized stage of criticism in connection with a literary controversy—or rather, literary revolution—in which Wordsworth is the protagonist. A special type of Wordsworth's poetry is stoutly challenged by the static taste of the times: the poet takes up the challenge, and, defending his own poems, widens his argument to the formulation of a general principle for the relation of appreciation to poetic production. I refer, of course, to the prefatory matter accompanying successive editions of Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads:* the Preface to the second edition, an Appendix to this on Poetic Diction, and an addition described as an Essay Supplementary to the Preface.[1] We need not follow the whole of Wordsworth's long argument: seldom has so unsatisfactory a train of reasoning led to a conclusion so weighty. We must remember the circumstances of the case. Wordsworth is voicing a reaction: like most reactionaries he is carried too far. Again, notwithstanding his effort to keep the discussion on general lines, the defense of his own particular poems is constantly emerging—poems which to us need no vindication. Nor does Wordsworth see the real issue as we can see it. What he conceives himself to be fighting against is "poetic diction," as the phrase was then understood: what he is really attacking is the tyranny of poetic diction, which would exclude every kind of poetry but its own. Revolting against this tyranny of a single poetic type, he is led to maintain that there can be no difference between the diction of poetry and of prose. And he seeks to give theoretic ground for his poems by arguments which few readers will find convincing, including a master fallacy by which he seems to make the

[1] Contained in most editions of his works. Or, in a separate volume, with notes by A. J. George (Heath). The references below are to the pages of this edition.

strength of a feeling, and the strength of the expression of that feeling, one and the same thing.[1] It is only when we reach the Essay Supplementary to the Preface that the discussion unfolds what may be called the evolutionary theory of taste.

The essay begins by dividing readers of poetry into three classes: the young, with whom poetry is a passion; the mature, who make it a recreation amid more serious occupations; and the regular student of literature. There is little difficulty in disposing of the judgments of the young. Men of business making poetry a recreation do not bring to bear upon it their full powers:

> Thinking it proper that their understandings should enjoy a holiday, while they are unbending their minds with verse.

Only from the third class may important criticism be expected.

> Whither then shall we turn for that union of qualifications which must necessarily exist before the decisions of a critic can be of absolute value? For a mind at once poetical and philosophical; for a critic whose affections are as free and kindly as the spirit of society, and whose understanding is severe as that of dispassionate government? Where are we to look for that initiatory composure of mind which no selfishness can disturb? For a natural sensibility that has been tutored into correctness without losing anything of its quickness; and for active faculties, capable of answering the demands which an Author of original imagination shall make upon them, associated with a judgment that cannot be duped into admiration by aught that is unworthy of it?—Among those, and those only, who, never having suffered their youthful love of poetry to remit much of its force, have applied to the consideration of the laws of this art the best power of their understanding.

At this point, we seem to be having delineated for us ideal criticism of the static kind. But Wordsworth sees that there is another side to the question.

[1] Compare page 4 (of George's edition).

At the same time it must be observed—that, as this Class comprehends the only judgments which are trustworthy, so does it include the most erroneous and perverse. For to be mistaught is worse than to be untaught; and no perverseness equals that which is supported by system, no errors so difficult to root out as those which the understanding has pledged its credit to uphold. In this Class are contained censors, who, if they be pleased with what is good, are pleased with it only by imperfect glimpses, and upon false principles; who, should they generalise rightly, to a certain point, are sure to suffer for it in the end; who, if they stumble upon a sound rule, are fettered by misapplying it, or by straining it too far; being incapable of perceiving when it ought to yield to one of higher order. In it are found critics too petulant to be passive to a genuine poet, and too feeble to grapple with him; men, who take upon them to report of the course which *he* holds whom they are utterly unable to accompany,—confounded if he turn quick upon the wing, dismayed if he soar steadily 'into the region';—men of palsied imaginations and indurated hearts; in whose minds all healthy action is languid, who therefore feed as the many direct them, or, with the many, are greedy after vicious provocatives;—judges, whose censure is auspicious, and whose praise ominous! In this class meet together the two extremes of best and worst.

Wordsworth now turns to literary history, and makes a retrospect of poetry and its reception through two centuries. He passes in review Dubartas, Spenser and Ariosto, Shakespeare and Milton, Cowley and the 'Metaphysical Poets,' Pope and Gay, Thomson's *Seasons*, Collins, the appearance of Percy's *Relics* and MacPherson's Ossianic poems. He finds a term to his retrospect in Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, the point here being the selection of poets whose lives are to be written by the great critic. It is a selection as mysterious to Wordsworth as to humbler readers, both for what it leaves out, and even more for what it takes in: the—

Roscommon, and Stepney, and Phillips, and Walsh, and Smith, and Duke, and King, and Spratt—Halifax, Granville, Sheffield, Congreve,

Broome, and other reputed Magnates—metrical writers utterly worthless and useless, except for occasions like the present, when their productions are referred to as evidence what a small quantity of brain is necessary to procure a considerable stock of admiration, provided the aspirant will accommodate himself to the likings and the fashions of his day.

In so extended a review it is natural that the individual predilections and dislikes of the writer should act as a disturbing force. But the general drift of the argument is clear—the contrast between acceptance of poetry by the age in which it appears and (what is implied rather than stated) its real and enduring value. So startling does the contrast appear, that the whole argument seems to tend toward negation of any basis for static principles of taste; but Wordsworth at one point breaks off to guard himself against such misapprehension:

> So strange indeed are the obliquities of admiration, that they whose opinions are much influenced by authority will often be tempted to think that there are no fixed principles in human nature for this art to rest upon.

To which Wordsworth adds this footnote:

> This opinion seems actually to have been entertained by Adam Smith, the worst critic, David Hume not excepted, that Scotland, a soil to which this sort of weed seems natural, has produced.

It is at this point that Wordsworth begins to open up the new theory as to the relations between poetry and taste.[1]

> If there be one conclusion more forcibly pressed upon us than another by the review which has been given of the fortunes and fate of poetical Works, it is this,—that every author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original*, has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed; so has it been, so will it continue to be. This remark was long since made to me by the philosophical Friend for the separation of whose poems from my own I have previously

[1] Page 87.

expressed my regret. The predecessors of an original Genius of a high order will have smoothed the way for all that he has in common with them;—and much he will have in common; but, for what is peculiarly his own, he will be called upon to clear and often to shape his own road:—he will be in the condition of Hannibal among the Alps.

Already we see laid down for us the lines of a conception of literary appreciation that is evolutionary in form. Literature presents itself as a succession of authors: each successive author will have much in common with his predecessors; but so far as he is original—so far as he is a term in the progressive series—he must create the taste by which he is to be appreciated. But Wordsworth proceeds to more explicit description of the relation between the producer and the responsive taste:

> And where lies the difficulty of creating that taste by which a truly original poet is to be relished? Is it in breaking the bonds of custom, in overcoming the prejudices of false refinement, and displacing the aversions of inexperience?

All this, it is implied, is necessary: but also something more. Wordsworth then examines the word *taste*. It is founded on a metaphor taken from the *passive* states of the body. This passive taste may serve for such things as 'proportion and congruity': it is wholly insufficient for the sublime and the pathetic. If pleasurable passion is to be aroused—

> The soul must contribute to its support, or it never becomes vivid—and soon languishes, and dies. And this brings us to the point. If every great poet with whose writings men are familiar, in the highest exercise of his genius, before he can be thoroughly enjoyed, has to call forth and to communicate *power*, this service, in a still greater degree, falls upon an original writer, at his first appearance in the world. . . . . Of genius, in the fine arts, the only infallible sign is the widening the sphere of human sensibility, for the delight, honour, and benefit of human nature. Genius is the introduction of a new element into the intellectual universe: or, if that be not

allowed, it is the application of powers to objects on which they had not before been exercised, or the employment of them in such a manner as to produce effects hitherto unknown. What is all this but an advance, or a conquest, made by the soul of the poet? Is it to be supposed that the reader can make progress of this kind, like an Indian Prince or general—stretched on his palanquin, and borne by his slaves? No; he is invigorated and inspirited by his leader, in order that he may exert himself; for he cannot proceed in quiescence, he cannot be carried like a dead weight. Therefore to create taste is to call forth and bestow power, of which knowledge is the effect; and *there* lies the true difficulty.

The reader will notice how Wordsworth italicizes the three words, *original*, *create*, *power:* the three essentials of evolutionary taste. There is in poetry advance, conquest, "widening the sphere of human sensibility": the stages of advance in this widening sensibility come by power communicated from creative production to appreciation. Every new departure in poetry involves a new departure in taste.

An argument which has rested so largely upon the history of poetic appreciation finds its natural conclusion in a distinction between the people and the public.

> Past and future, are the wings
> On whose support, harmoniously conjoined,
> Moves the great Spirit of human knowledge.

The voice that issues from this Spirit, is that Vox Populi which the Deity inspires. Foolish must he be who can mistake for this a local acclamation, or a transitory outcry—transitory though it be for years, local though from a Nation. Still more lamentable is his error who can believe that there is anything of divine infallibility in the clamour of that small though loud portion of the community, ever governed by factitious influence, which under the name of the *Public* passes itself, upon the unthinking, for the *People.*

At the conclusion, as all through the course of his argument, Wordsworth unfolds the evolutionary view of taste against a

background of a traditional taste founded on principles that are static.

The view of literary appreciation thus unfolded has equal importance for literary theory, and for the practical study of literature.

From the theoretical point of view, Wordsworth's principle as to the relation between production and appreciation brings the study of literature into closer harmony with the modern conception of evolution. The idea of evolution, we have seen, belongs to all ages; modern thought not only gives it emphasis, but also conceives the idea with greater definiteness. And the change is often associated with the appearance of Darwin's great book. Darwin seems to hold the same relation to evolution that Bacon holds to induction: the importance of both is not so much for the scientific specialist as for the apprehension of science in the mind of the general thinker. As a contribution to science, Darwin's work has the importance of a detail; his hypothesis of natural selection is soon felt to need supplementing and correcting. But in the mind of the general student of philosophy Darwin has given a clearer contour to the conception of evolution itself; he is brought to feel how closely evolution is wrapped up with the *origin of species*. Here, however, we are bound to note the wide difference between the things about which Darwin writes and such things as literature and art. In the world of plants and animals the species are unmistakable: we clearly see kinds perpetuating themselves by natural descent, "whose seed is in themselves." Is there anything corresponding to such species in the sphere of literature and art? A literary model begets imitations: is this sufficient to constitute a 'species'? Has the word 'species' any application to things of literature and art, except as a misleading metaphor, or a loose synonym for 'kind' or 'variety'? The answer is, that Wordsworth's principle of taste can be applied so as to put clear content into the idea of a 'literary

species.' This application of the principle may be expressed in axiomatic form:

Axiom.—The origin of literary species lies in the differentiation of the conventional.

The word 'convention' is a word of great importance in literature and art. Etymologically the word suggests something taken for granted, a tacit understanding between two parties; in this case, between production and appreciation. Literature is full of conventions. In itself, what could be more absurd than a dramatic soliloquy? That Iago, whose deep-seated instinct of suspicion imposes even on himself, should describe to us his secret plots in orderly sequence is contrary to nature. But it is highly convenient for the development of the story; this, and the fact that such soliloquies are traditional, lead the spectator of the play to accept them without thinking about the unnaturalness. Equally absurd are the speeches of epic poetry: that two warriors, meeting in the shock of battle, should stand with uplifted swords while they exchange speeches of twenty and twenty-five musical lines, would be ridiculous, were not such a device taken for granted. Such conventions rest partly on the convenience which more than compensates for the departure from what is natural, and partly on the fact that they have been established by long tradition; indeed, the farther back we go in the history of poetry, the larger appears the conventional element in comparison with what is original.

We have only to widen this general notion of the conventional in art into a series of terms, and we are brought to a conception of the species in art. To begin with, the whole of art rests upon convention. As we have seen,[1] what appears actual reality is outside art: nothing is art that is not a representation in some

[1] Above, pages 237 ff.

medium of expression. This medium of expression is the conventional in the widest sense.

Again, the different arts—painting, sculpture, music, poetry—differ by having a different conventional medium for each. So instinctive is this tacit acceptance of the particular medium of a particular art that it is never thought of unless something comes to disturb it. Suppose a painting that contains a figure with an uplifted arm; suppose some person, touching the uplifted arm, to make the foolish remark that the arm is unnatural because it is flat; he takes properly colored putty and models the arm in the painting. It cannot be denied that he has brought the representation one stage nearer reality, for arms are always solid: but obviously he has ruined the work of art by confusing the conventional medium of painting with the conventional medium of sculpture.

We now take a further step, and see that, in any art, the genera of that art differ from one another by a further difference of the conventional medium. Imagine a spectator familiar with every form of drama except opera, of which he has never heard; and imagine him to witness an opera which he mistakes for a drama. At first, everything he sees appears unnatural and absurd: people do not whisper secrets in accompanied duets, nor express a climax of emotion in a florid run. But as the performance continues there must come a moment when it is borne in upon this spectator's mind that the music does not belong to the life pictured, but is a part of the mode of representation; he has shifted the conventional in his appreciative attitude, and now all seems right, and he can feel how the music accentuates the emotions. In other words, opera has become a separate genus in the art of drama by a change in the conventional, which is now made to take in music.

The series reaches its final step as genus descends to species, and production calls upon the appreciative attitude to make one more differentiation in the sense of the conventional. A literary

species is thus constituted by all the works in which the conventional is the same; with a change in the conventional a new species originates. A particular model of drama may be repeated in a hundred different plays, with infinite variety of character, situation, and plot: but as soon as the call is felt to shift the tacitly accepted model, we have a different species. Of course, there is still the widest difference between the palpable characteristics that distinguish species in the material world and the fine shadings of diversity that obtain in such spiritual regions as poetry and art. But as a matter of theory, literature takes the form of evolution, with distinct species that originate from the shiftings of the conventional element in the reader's attitude of appreciation. And the starting-point for the consideration of any literary work will be its exact position in such a literary evolution.

In the practical study of literature the recognition of this literary evolution, with the flexibility of appreciation it involves, are constant necessities. For much that there is in art—as Wordsworth points out,[1] for such things as proportion and congruity—static taste is adequate. But such fixity of view is unfavorable for the perception of the specific character of a literary work, the underlying pattern which must be tacitly accepted before the work can be seen as it really is. We must bring our mind into harmony with the work, and its particular point of view, as surely as in using a microscope we must first adjust the focus. And how do we adjust the focus of a microscope? We do not need a set of rules, or a table of logarithms to assist us: we simply turn the lever this way and that with our eye upon the object until all seems in perspective. So from the literary work itself we must collect its underlying conventions, with assistance from any knowledge we have as to the position of the particular work in relation to literature as a whole.

[1] See above, page 263.

It is a homely saying, but one full of deep wisdom, that we should—

> Always read a book three times: the first time, to see what it is all about; the second time, to see what it says; the third time, in an attitude of friendly hostility.[1]

'Friendly hostility' is a felicitous expression to describe the golden mean of appreciative exactness: questioning what is before us to guard ourselves against misleading first impressions, but questioning with full preparedness for conviction. That we should read a book to see what it says is obvious. The description of the purpose of the first reading—to see what it is all about—aptly expresses the adjustment of our mental focus to a particular work before we can catch from it its own perspective. When this has been done, and not before, we can proceed to estimates of value without risk of misjudgment. In the interest of judicial criticism itself we have to recognize that the judicial criticism must always be preceded by the criticism of interpretation.

[1] Quoted to me as a saying of the late Sir Andrew Clarke, M.D.

CHAPTER XIII

INDUCTIVE CRITICISM, OR THE CRITICISM OF INTERPRETATION

I

The Criticism of Interpretation stands in such direct contrast with the reigning conception of criticism, which is criticism of judgment, that the best explanation of either is to place the two critical attitudes side by side.[1]

JUDICIAL	INDUCTIVE
The function of assaying	The function of interpreting
The work of a judge	The work of an investigator
The inquiry, What ought to be?	The inquiry, What is?
To test by good taste	To enlarge taste
To maintain standards against innovations	To keep watch for new literary forms
The literature to be adjusted to the reader	The reader to adjust himself to the literature

Such criticism of interpretation is inductive. The essence of inductive method is observation, suggested explanation, and verification of explanations by fresh observation. First, the content of the literary work is interrogated down to its smallest details, not for the sake of the details themselves, but with a

[1] The Introduction to my *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (Oxford University Press), written nearly thirty years ago, follows the same lines as the present chapter in its "Plea for an Inductive Science of Literary Criticism." I may be permitted to express my astonishment at the widespread misunderstanding of its argument, by reviewers who seemed unable to distinguish my position—that there is *one type* of criticism which is wholly inductive—from a view which they ascribed to me without any warrant—that *all* criticism must be inductive. The connection of the present chapter with the chapters that follow will make such misinterpretation impossible.

view to their harmony or unification in a common explanation. In the second place, these resulting explanations are always provisional—technically, *hypotheses*—ever ready to give place to results based on wider explanation.

Foundation axiom.—Interpretation in literature is of the nature of hypothesis, tested by the degree in which it explains the content of the literary work.

Such inductive treatment constitutes the very alphabet of science. The simplest application of it to literature is seen in such a thing as translation. A Latin sentence is before us of which two translations are offered. In the one translation the sentence comes out as an eloquent aphorism; the other is comparatively simple. But the first version obtains its aphorism by treating an imperfect subjunctive in the Latin sentence as if it were an imperfect indicative; to the other there is no such objection. Which is to be preferred? The aphorism is intrinsically a more valuable thing, and we may add it to our stores of wisdom; but it breaks down as a translation, because it is an hypothesis that fails to explain an important detail of the original. Similarly, the question is as to the character of Shakespeare's Hamlet. One formulation of this character has authority of a Coleridge or Hazlitt; a second represents the uniform tradition from Shakespeare's day to ours; a third affords opportunity to the actor for a splendid histrionic effect. But all these explanations (let us suppose) suffer by comparison with the details of the play: they are in contradiction to one item of the text, they leave a considerable part of what appears as to Hamlet without significance. If another hypothetical view, lacking the advantages of the others, yet is found entirely to agree with the text, contradicting no part of it and leaving no part of it without relevancy, this last explanation gives the truer character of the Shakespearean Hamlet.

This bare statement of inductive criticism, apart from its further implications, is apt to raise objections in some minds. One of these objections might be styled the *fallacy of mechanical induction.* Such interpretation, it is objected, takes all the spiritual element out of poetry, and all delicacy and refinement out of taste: it is a sort of interpretation by machinery, brought down to the level of the man in the street. But this objection is the common confusion between inductive treatment in general and the formal logic of induction. Logic, of any kind, will test a man's thoughts for him, if they need testing, but will not give him the thoughts to think. The objector need not be under any apprehension that the criticism of interpretation will be too easy. Is there anything more difficult than to observe correctly? And where is the supposed man of routine to get his hypotheses from? The truth is, that literary grasp and insight, and the mental touch which graduates the finest shades of significance in details, are just as much required in inductive as in other kinds of literary study. The difference is that the inductive explanation invites confronting with the literature to be explained.

Another of these preliminary objections is more theoretic in character. The inductive, it will be said, is right for the positive sciences: it has no place in literature and art where it can find nothing of the positive to work upon. As we have seen,[1] the real art does not consist in the concrete details of the picture or drama, but in the impressions these details are to make upon the spectator; these impressions are subjective and vary with different spectators, and thus lack positiveness. Now, if all this were urged as an example of the difficulty of inductive literary interpretation, there would be some ground for it. It has no force as an objection to the process itself. In the most positive sciences details of external nature will leave different impressions on different observers, so that the as-

[1] Above, chapter xi, pages 244–45.

tronomer has to allow for 'personal error,' or 'error of instrument.' But how does he deal with difficulties of this kind? By fresh observation. In all treatments of literature varying subjective impressions will be a difficulty. But the inductive interpreter has a means of meeting the difficulty, by appealing again and yet again to the literature that is being observed. The concrete details are not the art itself, but they constitute the objective limit upon the subjective impressions; and the results of inductive study are always provisional, valid in the absence of some explanation that will eliminate all difference of opinion. On the other hand, literature and art have one advantage over other studies as a field for inductive method, namely, the strict limitation of the evidence to be brought into harmony. If, in historic science, I can evolve a theory as to the character of Henry the Eighth which absolutely satisfies the facts, my fine theory is liable to be upset by the discovery tomorrow of an entirely new vein of evidence. For the Shakespearean Henry the Eighth the volume of evidence is closed.

II

At this point it may be well to illustrate the criticism of interpretation in application to some particular literary work. I take *The Monastery* of Sir Walter Scott.[1]

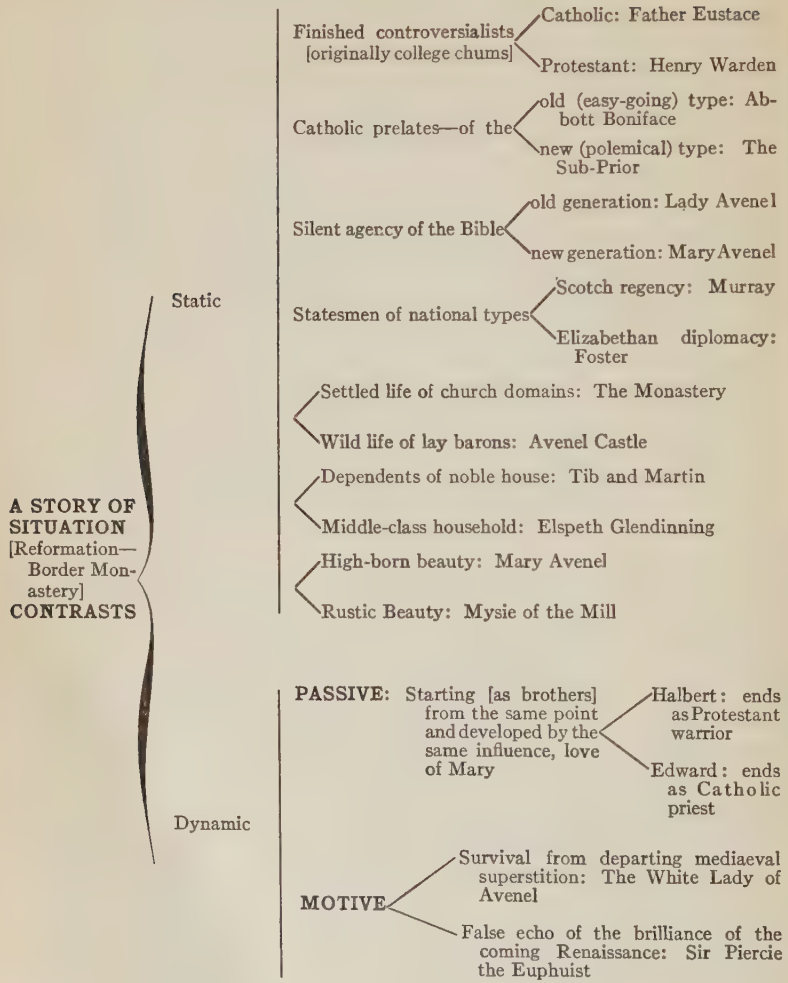
First, we have to interpret the spirit of the work as a whole: to formulate the unity of impression in which all the rich variety of the story finds its harmony. On page 274 is given an interpretative scheme of *The Monastery* (Chart XX).

It is essentially a story of situation: the Reformation movement, with the scene localized in the halidome of a monastery, a monastery belonging to the stormy borderland between

[1] The reader will perceive that I am wholly out of sympathy with the common idea that *The Monastery*, and especially "The White Lady of Avenel," is a failure. It is a capital example of the general contention in the present work that poets are pioneers in beauty, and that appreciation often takes a long time to enter into their conceptions.

CHART XX

The Monastery of Sir Walter Scott


A STORY OF SITUATION
[Reformation—Border Monastery]
CONTRASTS
Static
Finished controversialists [originally college chums]
Catholic: Father Eustace
Protestant: Henry Warden
Catholic prelates—of the
old (easy-going) type: Abbott Boniface
new (polemical) type: The Sub-Prior
Silent agency of the Bible
old generation: Lady Avenel
new generation: Mary Avenel
Statesmen of national types
Scotch regency: Murray
Elizabethan diplomacy: Foster
Settled life of church domains: The Monastery
Wild life of lay barons: Avenel Castle
Dependents of noble house: Tib and Martin
Middle-class household: Elspeth Glendinning
High-born beauty: Mary Avenel
Rustic Beauty: Mysie of the Mill
Dynamic
PASSIVE: Starting [as brothers] from the same point and developed by the same influence, love of Mary
Halbert: ends as Protestant warrior
Edward: ends as Catholic priest
MOTIVE
Survival from departing mediaeval superstition: The White Lady of Avenel
False echo of the brilliance of the coming Renaissance: Sir Piercie the Euphuist

Scotland and England. At once there arises a series of contrasts, pervading the material of the story through and through.

It is an age of controversy: and we have two finished controversialists, armed with the full panoply of religious and ecclesiastical combat—Father Eustace, on the Catholic side, and on the Protestant side Henry Warden. At their first meeting in the story there is a sudden recognition and joyous embrace: they have been originally college chums, now transported to opposite sides in the strife of the age, each a leader on his side. We have, again, two Catholic prelates: one is of the old and easy-going type, Abbott Boniface, all good cheer and dignity; when the crisis comes he yields his place to a successor of the new and polemic type, who will champion the church to the point of martyrdom. The silent agency of the Bible is seen at work, yet again with contrast: of the older generation, Lady Avenel dies a heretic without knowing it; her daughter, by reading her mother's Bible, and by the ministrations of Henry Warden, is brought consciously to embrace Protestantism. Rivalry of border peoples accentuates religious strife: we get just a glimpse of the strong Scotch regency of Murray, and of Elizabethan diplomacy in Sir John Foster, ever tremulous as to whether obedience to his capricious mistress's positive orders may not cost him his head. There is an interesting contrast between the settled life of the church domain and—in Avenel Castle—the wild life of the lay barons, who are Protestant only for what Protestantism pulls down. The convulsions of the times have led Lady Avenel and her family to take refuge with a household of humbler rank: in the everyday life that ensues there is a constant strain of contrast between dependents (Tib and Martin) of a noble family—a family that must have its own saints and not be served by saints that come and go at every sinner's bidding—and, on the other side, the middle-class independence of Dame Glendinning, who retorts that Our Lady and St. Paul are good enough for her. The story has two heroines: the

high-born beauty, Mary Avenel, is seen in contrast with the not less charming Mysie of the Mill.

These contrasts may be termed static: they belong to the stationary side of the plot as a picture of life. More dynamic contrasts are involved in the movement of the story. The passive side of the movement is furnished by the two Glendinnings. Starting, as brothers, from the same point in life, and developed by the same force, the love of Mary Avenel, they are carried as the story unfolds farther and farther from one another, until they end, Halbert as a Protestant warrior, Edward as a Catholic priest. It is character contrast that is also character development; interesting to all, except those with whom psychology means only morbid psychology. Especially interesting is the inner life of Edward: how his struggles against the secret joy he is tempted to feel at the death of his brother and rival transform him for a time into a fierce champion of vengeance, the opposite of his quiet self; how, when Halbert reappears, secret shame and the shock of reaction make him take the plunge into the irrevocable vows of the church.

The main movement of the story is latent in the original situation. This is reinforced by two special motive forces, over which Scott has thrown contrasted coloring, drawn from the age that is passing away and the era that is beginning to be. Sir Piercie Shafton, meddling tool of wiser conspirators, is the slight cogwheel which suffices to link the life of the remote district with national and political revolution. This element of the story is colored with the brightness of the Renaissance, for Sir Piercie talks in the exuberant diction of 'euphuism.' I often wonder at the number of commentators who point out, as if it were a fault, that this is not a good specimen of euphuism! Shafton is a feather-brained coxcomb: it would have been strange indeed if he had been indued with the scholarly eloquence of Lyly, and not with the euphuism of his own rival in

foppery, Fastidious Brisk. It is fair to add, that this monster of affectation has, at bottom, the purity of his age; it is thus a highly poetical justice that entangles him at last in the charms of the Miller's Maiden.

The other special motive force is drawn from the Middle Ages that are passing away. Rosicrucian fairy lore is allowed a survival in the White Lady of Avenel: an exquisite poetic creation that imports into the story the force of the supernatural. But for all her supernatural power the White Lady can only make eddies in the currents of events, which she is wholly unable to arrest.

To this White Lady of Avenel, as the most original element in *The Monastery*, we may apply the criticism of interpretation.

Such exceptional figures are often found to analyze into concrete embodiment of abstract ideas; as with the primitive myth-making instinct, imagination acts as a mode of speculation, and abstract fancies are clothed with plastic form. It is a long tradition which culminates in Scott's White Lady: and tradition is to poetic creation what evidence is for science. We may trace the foundation of the tradition to language itself: to the metaphorical instinct by which we half humanize the elements of nature, when we speak of the sighing of the wind, or the moaning of the waves upon the shore, or when we say that the earth opens its mouth and swallows up. Such half-humanization is carried forward to complete personification by the nature poetry of antiquity, with its spirits of mountains, of woods and waves. Science assists—the science of long ago. Modern chemistry will analyze nature into some seventy elements, but for a thousand years popular science was satisfied with four elements—earth, air, fire, and water. These were personified in the four orders of elemental beings: the ugly, misshapen Gnomes of earth, haunting the lonely places of nature; the flowing Spirits of water; the airy and almost invisible Sylphs;

the Salamanders whose home is fire. Additional ideas come in from the side of religion. The oldest of traditions represents man as formed from the dust of the earth, with the spirit of God breathed into him: imagination speculates as to other beings framed from the dust without any admixture of the divine, and carries the speculation farther to beings formed from the other three elements. The mind of the Middle Ages is deeply religious: its eternal interest is in the drama of man's fall and redemption, and imagination plays round this with suggestions of tempting demons and guardian angels, and also neutral spirits:

> That which is neither ill nor well;
> That which belongs not to heaven nor hell.

The Rosicrucian philosophy understood the four orders of elemental beings as such neutral spirits: mighty powers who could wield the force of the elements for one who knew the spells that could control them, though he would use these spells with some peril to his soul's salvation. The tradition in this form reaches Shakespeare: but Shakespeare transforms all he touches. He sees how the natural division between the downward elements of earth and water and the upward elements of air and fire falls in line with the downward and upward tendencies in man. Accordingly, Shakespeare gives us, in *The Tempest*,[1] two elemental beings instead of four: Ariel, identified with the upward-tending elements of air and fire and the upward-tending spirit in man, and Caliban, identified with the downward-tending elements of earth and water and the downward-tending human spirit. The transformation is by Scott carried a stage farther, and his White Lady is a being compounded of all four elements at once, combining upward and downward tendencies; while

[1] Chapters xii and xiii of my *Shakespeare as Artist* work out at length this conception of *The Tempest*, especially pages 255–50.

such a being will not rise so high in the spiritual scale as Ariel, neither will she sink so low as Caliban.

The evidence for all this is scattered throughout the story. In answer to the adjuration, "In the name of God, what art thou?" the White Lady answers with a riddling quatrain:

> Neither substance quite nor shadow;
> Haunting lonely moor and meadow;
> Dancing by the haunted spring;
> Riding on the whirlwind's wing.

Flame is the thing that is neither substance nor shadow; the haunters of lonely moors and meadows are the elemental Gnomes of earth; the other two lines describe elemental beings of water and air. In another place she says:

> Like the star when it shoots I can dart through the night—

(in Rosicrucian lore the light of stars is part of the fire element)—

> I can dance on the torrent and ride on the air,
> And travel the world with the bonny nightmare.

Nightmare again suggests the hideous apparition of the earth-monster. Sometimes it is one, sometimes it is another of the elements that is emphasized. We usually think of the White Lady as akin to air and water:

> Though I am formed of ether blue,
> And my blood is of the unfallen dew,
> And thou art framed of mud and dust:
> 'Tis thine to speak, reply I must.

But on the other hand there are the strange phenomena of the duel incident—how, when the enemies reach the appointed place of combat, they are staggered at finding a newly dug grave, with green turf neatly laid on one side of it; how Halbert, rushing for aid when he has run his antagonist through the body, comes back and finds the grave closed in and sodded with all the accuracy of a professional sexton; how later, when there is

a rush to the spot to determine who is the murdered man, not a vestige of a grave can be seen: all these impossibilities seem quite natural as freaks of a fairy belonging to the element of earth.

It must not be supposed that the conception of the White Lady is merely a mechanical construction of ideas. She is given plenty of individuality—such individuality as a fairy can possess. Character is made by the interplay of passions and law: for law fairy life substitutes pure caprice; the passions of the White Lady are cold reflections, incapable of warmth.

> Aping in fantastic fashion
> Every change of human passion,
> While o'er our frozen mind they pass,
> Like shadows from the mirror'd glass.

She is brought into touch even with the sacred mysteries of the human world; but, like the Peri in *Lalla Rookh*, she is an outsider, pointing the path her foot may never tread. Hence her disordered appearance when the spell raises her on a Friday.

> This is the day when the fairy kind
> Sit weeping alone for their hopeless lot,
> And the wood-maiden sighs to the sighing wind,
> And the mer-maiden weeps in her crystal grot:
> For this is the day that a deed was wrought,
> In which we have neither part nor share;
> For the children of clay was salvation brought,
> But not for the forms of sea or air!

At many points too numerous to mention the conception touches popular tradition. Families, as well as nations, have their guardian spirits—witness the Irish Banshee. Now, the Avenel family has for its heraldic cognizance "a shrouded female figure occupying the whole field": this cognizance is given a fairy personality in the White Lady, and her existence

is bound up with the existence of the Avenel family, which accordingly she interferes to protect. The necessities of the story have imposed on the author a truly formidable task—he has to contrive a *Protestant Fairy!* But the difficulty is solved at a stroke: in the controversies of the age Protestantism appears as the religion of a book—as Catholicism is the religion of the church—and a mystic book is an element in every story of magic. It is the "black book with the silver clasps"—the Bible in the vernacular tongue which has found its way into the halidome of the monastery—that makes the immediate point of attachment between the fairy and the movement of the story; to recover this book when it has been stolen from the Avenel family is the chief business of the White Lady.

Nothing in fairy lore can be more dainty than the comings and goings of this being of the elements. Sometimes she does not come: she simply *is there* when you are looking. At other times, the spell is hardly uttered before the speaker feels his blood freezing at a supernatural presence. Sometimes the appearance is more gradual: the air between Halbert and the holly bush becomes dim, and gradually condenses into a shape through which the outline of the bush is visible as through a veil of fine crêpe. There is a similar gradual disappearance: when she has taken out of her hair the bodkin (which is to play such a part in the plot) she shakes the disheveled hair till it falls as a veil around her, and the outline of her figure gradually becomes as diffuse as her flowing tresses. Or, she simply blends with the rising mist; her voice in the distance mingles with the sound of the water breaking over the mill dam; or, appearing in the beams of the full moon, she stoops to point out a hiding-place, and, ere the gesture is completed, has become the moonlight out of which she had emerged. She speaks always in a voice of ineffable sweetness; in the most musical of verse, and verse which changes its rhythm with every change of the speaker's mood.

Far removed from such a creature as Caliban, her lowest point in the moral scale is nothing more than a tomboyish delight in mischief. The Sacristan's adventure is an example; or the freaks of the duel incident, which have the effect of sending two men fugitives in opposite directions, each suspected of being the murderer of the other. Her highest note is such approach to the sacred mysteries as we have in the Grotto incident.

This Grotto incident, taken by itself, is a natural subject for inductive interpretation.

Halbert has been stung to jealousy by the more studious habits of his brother, and the advantage these have given in the common rivalry for the love of Mary. He bethinks him of the mysterious book which the White Lady has by his means restored to the Avenel family: in this he vaguely hints he will find a royal road to learning. Passionately seeking the haunted glen, he speaks the appointed spell, and then by the sudden apparition is frozen into dumbness. The fairy must be the first to speak: in the rolling lines that follow we feel echoed the rapidity of the spirit motion which has brought the White Lady to the spot.

> Youth of the dark eye, wherefore didst thou call me?
> Wherefore art thou here, if terrors can appal thee?
> He that seeks to deal with us must know nor fear nor failing!
> To coward and churl our speech is dark, our gifts are unavailing.
> The breeze that brought me hither now, must sweep Egyptian ground,
> The fleecy cloud on which I ride for Araby is bound;
> The fleecy cloud is drifting by, the breeze sighs for my stay,
> For I must sail a thousand miles before the close of day.

With difficulty Halbert falters, "In the name of God, what art thou?" and the fairy (as we have seen) speaks in mystic chant the law of her existence. Halbert is again dumb with astonish-

ment, and the apparition begins to fade. He rallies his will, and speaks of the mysterious book. The figure of the fairy droops, and she answers in the tone of a religious hymn:

> Within that awful volume lies
> The mystery of mysteries!
> Happiest they of human race,
> To whom God has granted grace
> To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,
> To lift the latch, and force the way;
> And better had they ne'er been born,
> Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.

As Halbert demands the book for himself, the lyrics flow out again in answer.

> Many a fathom dark and deep
> I have laid the book to sleep;
> Ethereal fires round it glowing—
> Ethereal music ever flowing.
> The sacred pledge of Heav'n
> All things revere,
> Each in his sphere,
> Save man, for whom 'twas given.
> Lend thy hand, and thou shalt spy
> Things ne'er seen by mortal eye.

Ever bold in action, Halbert places his hand in the cold hand of the White Lady; and then there is a sense of descending with fearful velocity, down and down and down, until with a shock they stop in a scene of blinding radiance.

> Looking around him he beheld a grotto, or natural cavern, composed of the most splendid spars and crystals, which returned in a thousand prismatic hues the light of a brilliant flame that glowed on an altar of alabaster. This altar, with its fire, formed the central point of the grotto, which was of a round form, and very high in the roof, resembling in some respects the dome of a cathedral. Corresponding to the four points of the compass, there went off four long

galleries, or arcades, constructed of the same brilliant materials with the dome itself, and the termination of which was lost in darkness. No human imagination can conceive, or words suffice to describe, the glorious radiance, which, shot fiercely forth by the flame, was returned from so many hundred thousand points of reflection, afforded by the sparry pillars and their numerous angular crystals. The fire itself did not remain steady and unmoved, but rose and fell, sometimes ascending in a brilliant pyramid of condensed flame half way up the lofty expanse, and again fading into a softer and more rosy hue, and hovering, as it were, on the surface of the altar, to collect its strength for another powerful exertion. There was no visible fuel by which it was fed, nor did it emit either smoke or vapor of any kind.

In the center of this flame, which seemed of strength to melt adamant, was seen the black book with the silver clasps, unaffected by the intense heat. At a sign from the White Lady Halbert plunged his hand into the flames to take the book: but his sleeve caught fire, and he withdrew his arm in an agony of pain. The cold hand of the fairy healed the pain: Halbert tore off the charred remnants of the sleeve and dropped them on the floor of the cavern, which they no sooner touched than they shriveled into tinder, and by a breath of air were dispersed into space.

> Mortal warp and mortal woof
> Cannot brook this charmed roof;
> All that mortal art hath wrought,
> In our cell returns to nought.
> The molten gold returns to clay,
> The polish'd diamond melts away;
> All is alter'd, all is flown,
> Nought stands fast but truth alone.

Then Halbert plunged his bare arm into the flame, and, without heat or inconvenience, seized the book. The flame gathered itself into one long and final stream, and went out in darkness. Halbert had the sensation of rapid ascending: when the two

emerged upon the haunted glen the shades of evening were rising on the scene Halbert had entered at noon. The White Lady faded into the ascending mist. Halbert went down the glen, a sober man in place of the passionate boy of that morning.

The haunting significance of the whole incident may be thus formulated: The four elements worshiping truth, in the absence of man, the true worshiper.

The thought itself is an echo of the words spoken in the triumphal entry into Jerusalem: "If these should hold their peace, the very stones would cry out." Man, to whom has been given the Bible as a symbol of eternal truth, is holding his peace, and in his absence the elements are adoring. The Being of the Four Elements is seen in the Grotto of the Four Elements. What we have here is elemental fire, elemental air and water and earth.

> Mortal warp and mortal woof
> Cannot brook this charmed roof;
> All that mortal art hath wrought,
> In our cell returns to nought.

That the flame should consume Halbert's sleeve was natural; but in the same way the charred remnants of the sleeve touching the floor consume into nothing. Only the symbol of truth remains unconsumed: round this the elements join in an act of worship. It is worship, when the creature presents himself in what is his highest beauty: man can worship "in the beauty of holiness," but the several elements have each a beauty of its own. For the element of earth there is beauty of form; hence the architectural suggestion of domed cathedral and retreating galleries. Water and air have donned their highest beauty by aid of stalactite walls and the myriad-colored reflections through the intervening atmosphere. Flame has a wider range of beauty: there is beauty of form, the clear-cut pyramid and the hovering outlines as of a fountain; beauty of

color, yellow and softer rose; beauty of movement, the spring upward and the slow descent. Moreover, it is a common act of worship: the "ethereal music" of which the fairy speaks is not music in the ordinary sense, but the harmony of all four elements moving together as the changing flame is answered by kaleidoscopic changes of reflections from all around. But the elements worship only in the absence of man as the true worshiper: when Halbert takes the book in his hand the flame goes out, and the adoration of the elements has ceased.

No doubt, those who are skeptical as to inductive interpretation would pronounce all this as the mere fancy of a commentator read into the incident, were it not that in this case the White Lady is herself the commentator:

> Many a fathom dark and deep
> I have laid the book to sleep;
> Ethereal fires round it glowing—
> Ethereal music ever flowing.
> *The sacred pledge of Heav'n*
> *All things revere,*
> *Each in his sphere,*
> *Save man, for whom 'twas given.*

Our interpretative formula comes, translated into lyric verse, from the lips of the fairy herself.

III

In this and similar examples of inductive criticism the question will naturally arise, What constitutes evidence in literary interpretation?

First, we have for evidence details of description, dialogue, incident, character, and the like, in the work under consideration. These, we have seen,[1] must be taken from the point of view of the reader or spectator. Distinction must be made be-

[1] Above, chapter xi, pages 244–45.

tween direct and indirect evidence. Suppose the question is as to the character of some personage in a story: direct evidence will be the sayings and doings of the particular personage; indirect evidence will be the impression he may be seen to have made upon other personages of the story.[1] And the indirect evidence may often be the more important of the two: for the impression the personage makes on those around him will be an impression made by the character as a whole, whereas the actual sayings and doings of the man himself may possibly, by the particular circumstances, be of an exceptional nature. It is important, again, to note that the process of interpreting may, to some extent, modify the details to be interpreted. We have seen as an axiomatic truth that in art no detail liveth to itself:[2] details of uncertain significance may attain definiteness by their relation to other details. In the interpretation of *King Lear*, I have elsewhere[3] made it an important point that Lear passes from excitement to actual madness by a series of hysteric shocks. Now, of the passages offered to support this view it is true that some, if taken by themselves, do not necessarily imply hysteric shock. But in at least one of the passages the significance is unmistakable:

> O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!
> Hysterica passio, down, thou climbing sorrow,
> Thy element's below!

So soon as it is seen that the passages cited form a series, it may be understood how the positive significance of one of them spreads itself over the rest. The interpretative correlation of disparate details—or chain evidence—is specially important for drama, where the histrionic art serves to give fixity to ambiguous details. The actor is a lens gathering light from all

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, chapter xvii, page 331.

[2] Compare above, page 244.

[3] *Shakespeare as Artist*, chapter x, pages 209–14.

over the play and concentrating it on each successive point as it arises. This general consideration, obvious in itself, is of some theoretic importance. For it has been made an objection against the application of inductive treatment to literature that the details of art are subjective and variable.[1] For the word 'variable' let us substitute the word 'elastic': it now becomes clear that their very lack of positiveness makes the details of a poetic work more malleable to the interpretative process.

In the second place we have to see that, in certain cases, evidence from outside of the work under consideration may be admitted as matter of interpretation. An allusion to another literary work obviously brings in evidence from outside; and the principle may be extended to the veiled echoings which form so important a part of classical poetry. Congruity of a detail with similar effects in other works of art is valid evidence. The theory of a series of hysteric shocks in the play of *Lear* rests on passages in the play itself; but it is corroborated by the fact that there is a similar series of hysteric shocks in the action of Marlowe's version of Faust.[2] The identification of Ariel with upward-tending air and fire and Caliban with downward-tending earth and water, amply supported by passages in *The Tempest*, is assisted by the fact that in other plays of Shakespeare there is a similar division of the elements. Thus the Dauphin in *Henry the Fifth* is made to say of his horse:

> He is pure air and fire; and the dull elements of earth and water never appear in him, but only in patient stillness while his rider mounts him.

And so Cleopatra, dying:

> I am fire and air; my other elements
> I give to baser life.

[1] Compare above, pages 272–73.

[2] Compare *World Literature*, pages 227–31.

Accepted traditions, like the Rosicrucian philosophy, may be drawn upon, just as in judicial proceedings public notoriety is accepted as evidence. But great caution must be exercised in thus making matter of interpretation what is external to the work in consideration. The principle is clear: that ideas imported from outside must find some point of attachment in the text of the work that is being interpreted. Thus, in the analysis of an historic drama, positive facts of history have no relevancy except so far as they appear in the play itself. The suggestion sometimes made, that the fate of Cordelia in *King Lear* is connected with her lack of patriotism in bringing the French army into England to deliver her father, is an example of inadmissible interpretation. It is a philosophic view read into the play without any support in the drama itself; on the contrary, the personages of the poem, including Albany himself, seem to regard the act of Cordelia as not less patriotic than filial.

IV

From the general consideration of inductive analysis we may pass to the particulars of its application, and note some of the errors and fallacies which, from this point of view, we may see as threatening literary interpretation.

Interpretation may go wrong, in the first place, by observing details singly and without a view to their co-ordination. This is the most fundamental of all fallacies, as ignoring a foundation principle—the relativity of details in a work of art. An illustration would be—in regard to the Grotto incident of *The Monastery*—if we were to fasten attention upon the flame, apart from the other portions of the description: a host of plausible meanings might suggest themselves. We might see in the flame the efforts of error to consume indestructible truth; or we might see the radiance of biblical truth destined to shine to the farthest parts of the earth; or in the ascending and descending flame we might find the rise and fall of successive

schools of interpretation;—or fifty other meanings. But the range of possible significance would be greatly reduced if, with the flame itself, we also take into our consideration the circumstance of the flame going out when Halbert touches the book. There is still further reduction of possibilities as we take in another, and yet another, point in the whole description; until at last we are left with only one interpretation for the whole incident.

This form of error rises to its height in the *allegorizing fallacy*, which ran rampant through literary interpretations in the Middle Ages. Of course, the whole content of a work may indicate it as an allegory. But the allegorizing fallacy appears where, in a work that has no claims to be an allegory, the separate details are given allegorical significance. For centuries this was the prevailing vice of interpretation: critical acumen could see the whole of Christian theology in different parts of Greek myths, just as it would be equally easy to read solar myths, portion by portion, into the Christian Scriptures. We have heard of the mystical interpretation which fastened upon one recorded detail in the Book of Job—that the patriarch begat seven sons—and understood this as a foreshadowing of the apostles of the Christian dispensation; if objection was made that only seven sons of Job are mentioned, whereas the apostles were twelve in number, this was met by the consideration that seven is four added to three and twelve is four multiplied by three! The fallacy is not yet wholly extinct: I have been informed of a work in preparation which will interpret the whole Book of Job as an astronomical treatise, Job and his friends being four stars in the constellation Boötes. It is evident that interpretation in this spirit depends wholly upon the mind of the interpreter, and in no degree upon the literary work that is to be interpreted. The wise words of Bacon[1] are relevant:

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, First Book, section iv, 5.

For the wit and mind of man, if it work upon matter . . . . worketh according to the stuff, and is limited thereby; but if it work upon itself, as the spider worketh his web, then it is endless, and brings forth indeed cobwebs of learning, admirable for the fineness of thread and work, but of no substance or profit.

A second fault is seen where interpretation, correct in its general aim, yet stops short with an imperfect survey of the details concerned. I have seen explanations of the Grotto incident which, while dealing minutely with every detail of description, passed over entirely the speeches of the White Lady. To this head we may refer the *fallacy of the moral*, which had such a fixed place in the criticism of the eighteenth century. The final maxim offered as a 'moral' will be a most imperfect substitute for the real moral analysis of the poem, which must of course take in the impressions made by each successive part of the poem on the reader's sympathies. The fallacy still survives in the confusion often found between interpretation and what may be called a 'lesson,' or reflection attaching itself to some particular detail. An accomplished preacher will draw half a dozen lessons from some passage of the Bible: but these lessons do not interpret the passage. *The Merchant of Venice* has sometimes been summed up in the maxim, *Summum jus summa injuria*. This principle, that justice pressed too far may prove rank injustice, is a legitimate reflection suggested by one part of the trial scene; if offered as an interpretation of the play it leaves three-fourths of *The Merchant of Venice* without significance.

In the same category is what may be styled the *fallacy of inconsistency*. Everyone remembers the magnificent eulogium upon music in the fifth act of *The Merchant of Venice*. Shakespeare has been called 'inconsistent' for putting so profound a speech in the mouth of so shallow a character as Lorenzo. The fallacy is patent: the fact that Lorenzo utters this speech is evidence that his character is imperfectly described by the

epithet 'shallow.' It is truly fallacious to form a conception of a personality out of only part of his action, and then blame this as 'inconsistent' with the rest. The 'character' of a poetic personage is such a view of him as will harmonize all that appears; if there is found inconsistency, this means that the process of interpretation is unfinished.

Yet a third kind of error arises where interpretation allows itself to be influenced by extraneous considerations not forming part of the evidence in the case. If we examine the Mephistophilis in Marlowe's version of the Faust story, we find a personality of transparent simplicity: yet readers often see in his speeches a depth of cynicism for which there is no foundation, except that the name has suggested the very different Mephistopheles of Goethe's play. Here we note what may be called the *fallacy of the superior person:* the attempt to make a literary work square with the views of the critic, who has a philosophy more advanced than the philosophy of the literature he is studying. Such a case will arise in regard to the Witches who appear in *Macbeth.* We do not believe in witchcraft: Shakespeare's age did. Accordingly, we often see attempts to explain away the supernatural character of this element in the play: the suggestion that the Witches are hallucinations of Macbeth, or symbols of the power of temptation. If however we follow the evidence of the scenes, it is abundantly clear that these Witches are objective figures, seen at their work of witchcraft in places where there is no Macbeth present to permit of hallucination; they are represented as possessing supernatural power, and can vanish like bubbles into air; again, they have means of supernatural knowledge, for the apparitions they raise reveal the history of Britain for centuries to come in the vision of kings who "two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry." It is a scientific error—error in the science of interpretation—where the interpreter insists on being wiser than the literature he is to interpret.

But there are other fallacies of interpretation, not arising directly out of the interpreting process, but rather depending upon fundamental literary misconceptions.

The most widely prevalent of these is the *author fallacy:*[1] the inability of many readers to keep under observation a piece of literature without their attention wandering to its author. Here we have to make a distinction between the two main divisions of literature, poetry and prose. In prose, as discussional literature, the question at issue is the author's meaning; if the reader has outside information as to the author, such information is valid evidence. Yet even here it is safe to lay down the position that the best evidence as to what an author has meant is what he has actually said. Where however the question is of poetry, or creative art, there the concern of criticism is with the art product itself, irrespective of the author who has produced it.

A counterpart to the author fallacy in the sister art of painting is afforded by the case of Turner. His pictures created a new departure in art, and were a revelation of the use of mist in nature scenery. Now, it has been suggested that Turner suffered from a certain eye-disease, well known to oculists, the effect of which is to make what is a perfectly clear scene appear misty. Suppose the suggestion true in fact: what difference can it make? The new departure in art has been established, and the new conceptions of mist and color have been grasped: this cannot be upset by the independent question whether it has all come about through the conscious intention of Turner, or by a merciful interposition of Providence in keeping the painter from knowing what he was doing. We remember the old story of the Greek painter. who had labored long over his picture of a boar hunt, but could never satisfy himself as to one effect—the foam at the mouth of the boar; losing patience at last he flung his sponge at the canvas and, by one chance in a

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 26–27.

million, exactly struck the mouth of the boar with an appearance of foam. In such a case criticism can only ask, Is what appears in the painting beautiful foam or is it not: how it has become what it is does not affect the painting. We may object on other than critical grounds to burning down farmyards in order to roast pigs: the question of criticism is whether roast pig is savory.

In poetry we may anticipate fallacies of this kind by laying down a preliminary principle:

Maxim.—A poet is not one who means, but one who makes.

Great part of the difficulty has arisen from the loss of the idea underlying the word 'poetry,' and its confusion with verse. As soon as we grasp that a poet creates and makes a thing, then it becomes clear that criticism must examine what has been created and made. I order a carpenter to make me a table; when the table comes I complain that it has only three legs. A bystander interposes: No, you must be mistaken; I know that carpenter intimately, I can testify to his honesty, and the careful management of his business, so that it would be impossible for any article to get out of his shop that was not true to specification. But what is the use of discussing the carpenter, when we can examine the table itself, and count the number of legs? If the poetic product is before us to analyze, considerations of what the poet was likely to produce are superfluous.

I know that to many readers it will appear simply ludicrous when a critic suggests that a poet is not a final authority as to his own poem. Yet it is certain that one of the greatest of poets has given an entirely incorrect account of his own poetic scheme; and this, not in a chance remark that might be explained by a lapse of memory, but in the very explanation with which he introduces his poem to the world. Spenser has prefixed a Preface to the first three books of his *Faerie Queene;* in which, having regard to the different order of events in history and poetry, he prepares his readers for his own scheme by a preliminary sketch

of each book. His sketch of the First Book is correct; the sketch of the Second Book is in flat contradiction to the poem that follows. The Preface says:

The second day ther came in a Palmer, bearing an Infant with bloody hands, whose Parents he complained to have been slayn by an Enchaunteresse called Acrasia; and therfore craved of the Faery Queene, to appoint him some knight to performe that adventure; which being assigned to Sir Guyon, he presently went forth with that Palmer: which is the beginning of the second booke, and the whole subject thereof.

When we turn to the beginning of this Second Book, we find Sir Guyon proceeding in company with the Palmer in the expedition against Acrasia, when they come across the two parents who are to prove victims of Acrasia, and the incident takes place that brings about the death of the parents and the dyeing of the infant's hands with indelible stain in its mother's blood. What Spenser says he has done in this book is one thing, what he has actually done is quite another thing: with which of these two things is criticism concerned?

The author fallacy arises most usually in connection with the more complex examples of art. When criticism has analyzed these, in some more or less elaborate scheme that brings out the symmetry of the poem and the connection of its parts, many readers—without stopping to compare the explanatory scheme with the literature it is intended to explain—will break off at once with the question whether we are to suppose that the poet "really meant" all these fine correspondences that the critical scheme suggests. The question is not only irrelevant, it further betrays a mental confusion between two different uses of such words as 'purpose' and 'design.' The conscious purpose of a poet—if he has one—belongs to his biography; what criticism means by 'purpose' and 'design' is the purpose particular parts are seen to serve in the poetic product when analyzed. Creation and criticism belong to different types of mental process. Creation is instinctive, without consciousness

of steps in a process, acting through a general sense of symmetry or beauty: criticism is purely analytic. The two types of mental process distinguish different minds, and it is by accident if a poet is also a critic. More than this, where the instinctive and analytic processes come together in the same mind, they are apt to interfere with one another.

> The centipede was happy, quite,
> Until the toad, in fun,
> Ask'd, Pray, which leg goes after which?
> This wrought her mind to such a pitch,
> She lay distracted in a ditch,
> Considering how to run!

It is the natural order of things that instinctive creation acts first, and expresses itself in products: long afterward, when poetic products have multiplied, so as to admit of comparison, criticism comes to reveal the underlying scheme by which beautiful things have become beautiful. To such criticism the only meaning of the artist is that which stands revealed in his art.

A kindred confusion may be called the *fallacy of art and nature.*[1] All that inductive treatment claims is readily conceded to the study of external nature: but it is traditionally supposed that there is a gulf between such nature and art. The fact that at the back of art there is an artist, human and fallible, is supposed to exempt what he produces from the scientific examination that is proper for things of nature. We meet this by laying down a counter-principle:

Foundation axiom.—Art is a part of nature.

The traditional supposition overlooks how the artist himself, and the process—whatever it may be—by which he produces his art, are themselves a part of nature. This essential unity of nature and art has impressed itself on the greatest of minds.

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 36–37.

It has nowhere been better expressed than in the words Shakespeare puts into the mouth of the disguised king in *Winter's Tale*.[1] The Shepherdess has been expressing an instinctive objection to certain cultivated flowers—why?

Perdita. For I have heard it said
There is an art which in their piedness shares
With great creating nature.

Polixenes. Say there be;
Yet nature is made better by no mean
But nature makes that mean: so, over that art,
Which you say adds to nature, is an art
That nature makes. You see, sweet maid, we marry
A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
And make conceive a bark of baser kind
By bud of nobler race: this is an art
Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
The art itself is nature.

Hobbes opens his *Leviathan* with the principle that nature is the art of God; and he is probably quoting from a noble passage of the *Religio Medici*:[2]

Now nature is not at variance with art, nor art with nature; they being both the servants of his providence. Art is the perfection of nature. Were the world now as it was the sixth day, there were yet a chaos. Nature hath made one world, and art another. In brief, all things are artificial; for nature is the art of God.

And all these have been preceded by Dante:[3]

Nature takes its methods and its ends
From God, whose Mind in skill and art is shown; . . . .
Your Art, as far as may be, close behind
Follows, as scholars near their teacher tread;
So in your Art we may God's grandchild find.

[1] IV, iv, 86.

[2] Page 342 of Bohn's edition.

[3] *Inferno*, canto xi, 99.

Another literary misconception of a general nature may be called the *fallacy of kind and degree.*[1] Criticism is the noting of distinctions. Now, it is an infirmity of many minds to understand all distinctions as distinctions of degree; that is to say, where two things appear different there is a tendency to think of the two as higher and lower, correct and incorrect. There is an inherent difference between man and woman: by the fallacy under consideration the average man interprets the difference as the inferiority of woman; the average woman, resenting this, is impelled to deny that there is any difference between the sexes; it thus becomes possible for a poet to say, as if it were a novel position—

> For woman is not undeveloped man,
> But diverse.

Similarly, the ways of children differ from the ways of people who have grown up: the older education assumed that these ways of children were simply immaturities, to be suppressed as soon as possible; modern education sees a difference of kind, not of degree, and studies the psychology of the child mind as faithfully as it studies the psychology of maturity. Differences of merit—higher and lower, correct and incorrect—are alien to the spirit of inductive criticism, and belong wholly to the criticism of judgment.

Interpretation is occupied with differences of variety and kind. We study the delineation of a personality in a particular piece of literature, and find that it rests upon close resemblance to real life; we call this 'character,' using a word founded on the metaphor of the stamp, that suggests close resemblance. In another piece of literature, the delineation of a personality is effected in quite a different way—by accumulating all possible and impossible qualities of a certain type: unlimited examples of self-conscious hypocrisy are heaped together to make a Peck-

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 29–32.

sniff, unlimited repetitions of foppery to make a Fastidious Brisk. We call this second mode of treatment 'caricature': using a word which—of the same root as 'cargo'—suggests overloading. Now, the effect of the fallacy under consideration is that one of these modes of treatment is assumed to be correct, or higher, and the other incorrect, or lower: many people use the word 'caricature' as if it meant bad character painting. But the two things are simply different in kind; and literary art is the richer for having at its disposal the two modes of delineation. One will distinguish the art of a Thackeray; the other, the art of a Ben Jonson. And in highly complex art, like that of Shakespeare, the two treatments can be joined together in the same play; in *Much Ado* we have the most refined characterization in the parts of Claudio and Hero, and the roughest caricature in the parts of Dogberry and Verges.

We may note again the *fallacy of law and fault.*[1] This is caused by the double meaning of the word 'law': there are laws in the political sense, imposed upon a subject by some authority; and there are scientific laws, derived from a subject by an observer. The confusion is common to criticism and other fields of thought.

> A law of nature, as formulated in a scientific treatise, is a statement of facts, and nothing more. Expressed in the indicative mood, it has nothing whatever to do with the imperative. Science knows nothing of a celestial Ukase compelling the earth to gravitate toward the sun. We know that it does so gravitate with a certain intensity, and that is the whole story. Nevertheless, so strong is the realistic tendency that, in speaking of laws of nature, the most careful writers too seldom avoid "a tacit reference to the original sense of the word *law*, ... the expression of the will of a superior."[2]

The laws of poetry are laws in the scientific sense—formulations of poetic practice; the law of the unities in Greek drama is just

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 32–35.

[2] Fiske's *Cosmic Philosophy*, Volume IV, page 204.

as much a statement of facts as are the three laws of motion. The fallacy consists in mistaking these for laws in the other sense; as if the laws of poetry were imposed by some authority —presumably that of criticism—upon poets. And by an extension of the error we hear of 'poetic license,' as if—by some mysterious dispensing power—poets were exempted from some of the restrictions imposed upon their brethren of prose. The distinction between the two kinds of laws is of first importance to inductive criticism. When an Englishman does not conform to the laws of England, he is violating law. When a poet does not conform to existing laws of poetry, he is extending law. A whole history of poetry might be written upon these lines: bringing out how what were at first regarded as 'faults' and violations of law come later to be recognized as extensions of law, principles of new departures in poetry. We may lay down as a paradox of criticism that *art is made legitimate by refusing to obey laws.*

I am inclined to mention yet another fallacy, and to describe it as the *common-sense fallacy.* We sometimes find a prejudice against inductive interpretation express itself by laying down that "common-sense" can see how the interpreters have read their own intricate fancies into the simplicity of the poetic masters. Now, it is true—appallingly true—that interpreters of literature have often read fancies of their own into the literature on which they comment: but to do this is not inductive criticism, but, on the contrary, the greatest of all offenses against inductive criticism. Nothing in inductive treatment is more fundamental than the principle of verification: that all explanation is provisional, to be verified by comparison with the content of the literature. Inductive interpretation is simply a plea that literary interpretation is a thing that rests on evidence. On the other hand, the fallacy sets up the most absurd of all criteria—the infallibility of the casual reader. We recognize that poets are pioneers in art, and in theory we do

homage to them as supreme minds; yet in practice we often behave as if all that such a supreme mind, excited to its highest pitch by inspiration, can effect, must be immediately perceptible to an average mind at the first moment of contact with it. And the absurdity was never so great as at the present time, when the minds of readers—by habits of newspaper and similar reading—have been trained to a mastery in the art of skimming and discursive half-attention. Creation, we have seen, involves responsive creation on the reader's part; and it may take many readings before the average mind can come up to the pace of the great master. Inductive interpretation makes its appeal neither to the reader nor to the critic, but always to the literature itself. This appeal to the literature will always lie open; meanwhile, it is well to remember that Common-Sense has a twin-sister—Inertia.

V

This chapter cannot conclude better than by returning to its starting-point: that the criticism of interpretation is most clearly defined by its antithesis to the criticism of judgment. The mind cannot commence its work of assaying and judging until it has concluded its work of investigating and interpreting; the thought of what ought to be is so much disturbance to the examination of what actually is; consciousness of a formed taste is unfavorable to the effort at enlarging taste; we cannot at the same time be maintaining standards against innovations and keeping watch for new literary departures; we cannot be at the same time adjusting literature to our ideas and adjusting our ideas to literature: in a word, we cannot at the same moment be judicial and inductive. Like oil and water, the two conceptions of criticism have their value: like oil and water the two will not mingle. The case for the criticism of interpretation is so simple and obvious that no one disputes it in theory: in practice it is neglected by being taken for granted. Every

attempt at valuation of literature, every estimate of correctness, assumes that the literature to which it is applied has been rightly understood. What this chapter has endeavored to show is that such process of accurately understanding literature cannot be carried on while there is disturbance from judicial ideas. Hence Hogarth's paradox, that *everyone is a judge of painting except the connoisseur.* The mind habituated to form judgments will see more than the plain mind within a certain range of art. But where the unexpected comes in, where there is a call for a total readjustment of the receptive attitude, the mind will not do this if it has the easier alternative of suspecting that the unusual element is something which ought not to be. The most judicial of critics knows that he must be fair and without prejudice. But a great deal more than sense of fairness is required for the sympathetic effort that will overtake the pioneers in creation. Thus, in art judgment is itself a prejudice—a prejudice against what is novel.

What theory in this matter lays down, history confirms. As long as the traditional conception of criticism has been synonymous with judgment, literary history has been a triumph of literature over criticism. The modern attitude to literature does not exclude valuation and judgment. But it recognizes that a criticism of judgment must have been preceded by a process of the freest inductive examination; and that thus the most fundamental element in criticism is the criticism of interpretation.

CHAPTER XIV

THE HISTORY OF CRITICAL OPINION

Our treatment of literary criticism commenced by distinguishing four different types. Of these, the two which have been discussed in the preceding chapters seem to belong to the very nature of things; the two that remain to be treated have their foundations rather in literary history. This then seems a favorable point at which to make a rapid survey of the history of criticism.[1] In accordance with the general plan of this work I attempt, on page 304 (Chart XXI) to present in tabular form the whole scheme of this history, with its successive phases and underlying principles.

The development of our world literature, as the term is used in this book, falls into four divisions: Hellenic, Mediaeval, Renaissance, and Modern. The first two are successive epochs; the last two cannot be chronologically separated, but represent two influences moving together, the one diminishing as the other advances.

In ancient Greece—like Athene springing fully armed from the brain of Zeus—criticism makes its appearance full grown in the *Poetics* of Aristotle. It is a presentation of literary theory by a philosopher of first rank; the *Poetics* is as much a standard book today as it was two thousand years ago. And yet, from our viewpoint of world literature, it seems a capital example of the premature methodization which Bacon has distinguished as one of the incidental weaknesses of learning.[2]

> Another error . . . . is the overearly and peremptory reduction of knowledge into arts and methods; from which time commonly

[1] Compare above, page 236, note 2.

[2] *Advancement of Learning*, First Book, section V, 4.

CHART XXI

The History of Critical Opinion

Hellenic Epoch

Formulation of literary theory in Aristotle's *Poetics*—by a philosopher of first rank—yet premature methodization

Unformulated criticism in influence of the great masterpieces, especially of epic and tragedy, so sudden as to retard development, especially by fixing types

Gives rise to poetic echoing

Thus gradually formed Classical idea

Mediaeval Epoch

Draws in *Hebraic Literature:* all-powerful in matter—influence of form retarded by mediaeval dispersion into sentences

Draws in creative literature of European and oriental peoples subsequently aggregated as *Romance*

Absolutely free creation in vernaculars [Classical idea surviving in language of education]

Criticism quiescent

The Renaissance

brings these two epochs sharply together

Antithesis of
- Classical: centripetal: established forms—detailed echoings
- Romantic: centrifugal: free matter and form—tendency to fulness and variety

Struggle of Classical theory, now interpreted as binding law—against free creation, identified with Romance [Shakespeare's "the law of writ and the liberty"]

Perfect balance of opposite influences in Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser

Every conceivable variety of position as between the two influences taken both by formal theory and creative production—with steady advance toward the modern spirit

Modern Conception of Literature

Absolute triumph of free creation: Art a part of Nature—obtaining formal recognition in Wordsworth's Evolutionary Theory of Taste—fixed types giving place to fusion of elements

Criticism differentiates into *four* types

- Criticism of Interpretation: resting on freedom of creation
- Judicial Criticism: criticism in restraint of production
  - Judgment by Classical standards
  - Judgment by Classical and Modern standards
  - Judgment by fixed standards of some kind
- Subjective Criticism: resting on freedom of the reader: critical discussion (of all schools) takes new value as the literary medium for the reaction of literature upon its readers
- Speculative Criticism: formal literary theory relaxes into tentative advance toward an underlying philosophy of literature

sciences receive little or no augmentation. But as young men, when they knit and shape perfectly, do seldom grow to a further stature; so knowledge, when it is in aphorisms and observations, it is in growth: but when it once is comprehended in exact methods, it may perchance be further polished and illustrated and accommodated for use and practice; but it increaseth no more in bulk and substance.

The word 'premature' need have no disparaging sense as regards Aristotle, but it is important with a view to the use subsequently to be made of Aristotle's authority. We may note the premature methodization in three particulars. First, Aristotle draws his conceptions solely from the literature of the Greeks: all the insight that comes from the comparative method is wanting. Again, this Greek literature itself is, in Aristotle's day, at an incomplete stage of its development; magnificent though its products are, yet it has not reached many of the phases which we have seen to belong naturally to the life-history of a literature. The differentiation of prose from poetry is not completed; the important application of prose medium to epic has not appeared, nor has the conception of fiction displaced tradition;[1] still less is there any approach to the floating literature in which literary development can find completion. A third note of prematureness is the fact that criticism has not yet distinguished itself from other treatments of literature; while the *Poetics* is largely made up of literary theory, yet the tone of the writing is often that of a manual of practical composition, and even of a manual of grammar.[2] There is nothing in the book itself to suggest the position Aristotle was destined to hold for a long period, that of a dictator to universal literature.

But all criticism is not formal criticism. There is another kind of critical influence, unformulated, in the great literary

[1] On this important point compare *World Literature*, chapter ii, pages 106–8.

[2] *Poetics*, chapter xx; and to a large extent chapters xxi and xxii.

masterpieces: which present in concrete form critical conceptions, and by becoming models make these conceptions current. In this respect Greek literature holds a unique position.[1] There is no parallel to the suddenness with which the literature of Greece rose from the level of folk-lore to a height of intrinsic excellence—especially in epic and tragedy—which has never been surpassed. We are apt to forget how so sudden an outflowing of poetic production may act as a retarding influence on literary development, by generating in the mind of the public that receives these masterpieces a critical attitude of conservatism. The audiences formed in their taste by Aeschylus and Sophocles will not tolerate what seems to us the small divergence from the type which is effected by Euripides. The attempt to proceed from mythic stories in tragedy to invented fiction finds no acceptance.[2] And besides their general influence as literary models, the masterpieces have a more particular restraining effect in giving fixity to literary types. Homer is epic poetry: it is easy to pass from this to the idea that epic poetry is Homer, and that what is not Homeric is not epic. Thus such things as epic, lyric, drama, instead of being elements of literary effect that can fuse together, are conceived as types, kinds, *genres*, defined by their first masterpieces, and giving laws to those that succeed.[3] Through great part of the history of criticism the 'tyranny of kinds' is one of the strongest of critical forces.

[1] On this general subject compare *World Literature*, pages 16–18, 45; and above, chapter viii, page 171.

[2] The attempt seems to have been made by the dramatist Agathon (Aristotle's *Poetics*, chapter ix, 1451 *b*). Compare note to page 204 of G. Murray's *History of Ancient Greek Literature* (Appleton).

[3] On this general subject compare above, chapter i (especially page 20), and chapter ii; and below, page 491. Professor Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* lays stress on the 'Idol of Kinds,' and the evil it has worked at various periods. Compare his interchapters iv and v; or more particularly pages 216, 230, 233, 287–88, 409, 414–15 (of Volume II); and pages 409–10 (of Volume III).

The critical conservatism of Greek literature manifests itself in the details of poetry, as well as in its general forms. It fosters the specific art effect that we call the poetic echo. What is implied is not the mere fact that details of later and of earlier poetry resemble one another; the recognition of the resemblance by the reader becomes itself a poetic beauty of a subtle and inspiring kind. The reader of such a poet as Virgil has but half understood his author if he rests content with the surface meaning, and has failed to catch how, at every turn, conceptions and phrases have been pointing back to conceptions and phrases in some Homeric or bucolic original. These poetic overtones are a leading element in literary art, until they culminate in the poetry of Milton.

In all these ways is being gradually formed the literary ideal which we indicate by the word 'Classical.' The etymology of the term is in exact harmony with its critical significance: the suggestion is of a literary aristocracy with a prerogative voice in determining the conception of beauty in literature. The great masterpieces are the critical Four Hundred, whose smallest habits influence the idea of poetic correctness. Thus it is hardly necessary to explain that the study of 'Classics' is quite a distinct thing from the study of Greek and Roman literature; a man may be a finished classical scholar to whom the bulk of Greek and Roman literature is an unknown field. The closed circle of the original great masterpieces, with their imitations and echoes in later Greek and in Latin literature, stand apart from the rest of the two literatures as these pass through their phases of natural development. And this Classic literature is the main contribution of the Hellenic epoch to world literature. Whatever literary revolutions may follow, Classical theory and Classical poetry maintain themselves as a permanent element of the whole; in contrast with what comes later Classical becomes one of the two poles of literary effect.[1]

[1] Chapter xxv, below, treats the subject of literary echoing. Compare also *World Literature*, pages 196–219.

When the stream of Classical literature passes into the Middle Ages, it is augmented by two other literary streams, each as mighty as itself—Hebraic literature and Romance. The educated class of the mediaeval world, the clergy, although Latin is their common language, yet preserve Classical literature rather as a literary heritage than as a formative influence. But to the whole of society, educated or uneducated, there has come the great Hebraic literature of the Bible. In itself, this is as original and almost as many-sided as Greek literature; but as regards its literary influence we have to distinguish between matter and form. The matter of the Bible is all-powerful: Europe is Christianized, and to return to the religion of ancient Greece, and the conceptions of human life that go with that religion, becomes an impossibility. But there can be no corresponding influence on literary form: for before the Bible reaches the Middle Ages it has been broken up by commentators into sentences, clauses, in which all trace of literary form is lost.[1] The other literary stream is that which is vaguely, yet effectively, indicated by the name Romance. Europe is a unit: the imaginative literatures of its separate races mingle together, and to these is added what the general mind retains of Greek or Roman poetry, and what the general mind conceives of Biblical story apart from theological formulation. When later Europe becomes permeated by Saracenic influences, a means is provided for bringing oriental imagination—Indian, Persian, Arabic—into the common stock.[2]

The relation of all this to the history of criticism can be simply stated. Dante, the great poetical figure of the Middle Ages, is also its great interpreter: from him we have the formulation of church and state which constitutes the Holy Roman

[1] This has been fully discussed above, chapter iii, pages 65 ff.

[2] This has been discussed above, chapter iv, pages 87–88; and more fully in *World Literature*, pages 26–53.

Empire,[1] and from Dante we have the keynote of mediaeval criticism.[2] The very title of Dante's work is suggestive—*De Vulgari eloquio*. Eloquence in Latin can be left to the *trivium* and *quadrivium* which make the staple of clerical education; the mission of mediaeval criticism is with the vernacular languages, guarding these from dialectic corruption, and building them up to become an adequate medium for great poetry. Thus, in contrast with the critical conservatism of the Hellenic period, we now have criticism quiescent or taking sides with creation. There is an absolutely free field for unlimited creative activity in the vernacular. And all the circumstances of mediaeval life—its religion, its chivalry, its sense of adventure and wonder—stimulate this ever-increasing poetic aggregate; which by future ages is distinguished as 'Romance,' and which in the mediaeval epoch itself is the paramount literary force.

The Renaissance brings the Hellenic epoch and the epoch of the Middle Ages together, and brings them together with a shock. There arises at once, as a principle of universal literature, the antithesis of Classical and Romantic, the centripetal and the centrifugal forces of poetry. The Classical ideal is centripetal: leaning to established forms, enriched by detailed echoings. Romanticism is a centrifugal force: it connotes freedom—to the extent of wildness—in both matter and form; it favors surprise and variety. The Romantic thus tends to fulness of matter: and, in art, fulness of matter must balance itself with complexity of form. Thus Renaissance influence is traced where we find the struggle between Classical or other formal theory and free creation, a freedom of creation identified by historical surroundings with the idea of Romance.

[1] In his *De Monarchiâ*.

[2] Professor Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* is specially full and strong on Dante's place in criticism (Volume I, Book iii, chapter i, and interchapter iii).

As Dante voiced the critical attitude of the Middle Ages, so the keynote of the Renaissance spirit is struck by its most commanding poetical figure. But there is a difference: from a personality so shrouded in the mist of reticence as Shakespeare's we must not expect a critical treatise. If even a hint of his critical position comes to us, it is certain to come in dramatic form. We surely get a glimpse of Shakespeare as a critic in the famous speech which, half-mockingly, he puts into the mouth of the pedant Polonius:[1]

> The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

The man who could write these lines had a technically exact grasp of the literary situation; though all that is allowed to appear is a sense of humor amused by the frantic attempts of theory to keep up with the bubbling cross-currents of a transition age, and then the master phrase which sums up the whole Renaissance spirit in "the law of writ and the liberty." It is hardly necessary to point out that the force of the phrase does not lie in the mere words *law* and *liberty*, but in the echo of the New Testament. The age of St. Paul and St. James had been a spiritual Renaissance: in that age, as now in the literary Renaissance, there had been a struggle between "the Law"—the codified moral classics of an earlier era—and the more complex and deeper-seated law that was presenting itself as the liberty of inspired morality.

A perfect balance of the opposite influences is presented in the three great masters, Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser; perhaps to a less extent in Tasso. Shakespeare as truly dramatized Romance as the miracle play dramatized Bible story.[2] The

[1] *Hamlet*, II, ii, 415.

[2] Compare above. chapter viii, pages 184 ff.

dramatic machinery by which he effected this is the machinery of Classical drama, stripped of accidentals and raised to a higher power. The lyric element of ancient drama disappears as a separate element, to reappear in the lyrically inspired diction of the plays.[1] The simple unity of ancient plot is raised to the harmony of separate unit stories, to meet the added fulness of Romance. In the matter of the *Faerie Queene* Classic and Romantic freely intermingle; the plot of the poem rests its base upon the *Ethics* of Aristotle, while its development involves a fulness of Hebraic moral conceptions which is carried to the very verge of Puritanism. But the most perfect balance of all is in Milton. The *Paradise Lost* is the formulation of the Bible, as Protestantism interpreted the Bible: the form of the poem is the most perfect of all Classical epics. Again, the then orthodox idea that the gods of the old world were the demons of the Christian system made it possible to draw Classical mythology into harmony with Biblical conceptions. Yet again: Milton stands side by side with Virgil in the prominence given to the poetic echo; he goes beyond Virgil in the fact that the whole of Biblical literature is added to Classical literature as the field from which these literary echoes are drawn.[2] Tasso's *Jerusalem* differs from the rest in being a consciously artificial epic: by the machinery of main action and digressions the Biblical and other elements are kept to some extent outside one another. In its whole spirit Tasso's poem suggests the mechanical compound as distinguished from the chemical combination.

I have described the antithesis of Classical and Romantic, centripetal and centrifugal, as a principle of universal poetry.[3] The peculiarity of the Renaissance period is that Classical

[1] Compare *Ancient Classical Drama*, page 226, and chapter vi generally.

[2] I have dealt with this aspect of Milton's poetry below, chapter xxv, pages 447–48; and again in *World Literature*, pages 196–219.

[3] Above, chapter iv, page 88; or *World Literature*, page 49.

theory and practice is now interpreted as a binding law for literature in general; whatever sets itself against the dead hand of a poetic past comes henceforth to be more or less identified with Romance. Every conceivable variety of position as between the two influences is taken both by formal theory and creative production;[1] but there is always a steady advance in the direction of modern freedom. Adequately to support this statement would be to write a detailed history of criticism. The story of criticism has been told by Mr. Saintsbury, with his eye on the critical texts. Though Mr. Saintsbury's book is written from a very different standpoint from that of the present work, yet the drift of the history of criticism comes out the same. It is made clear how, from the Renaissance, there is the origination and gradual crystallization of a neo-Classic creed and orthodoxy; how various forces act as dissolvents to this orthodoxy; but these oppositions to restriction, naturally, do not formulate themselves, and hence the way is cleared for a new critical departure in the era of Wordsworth and Coleridge. It is difficult even to enumerate the individual positions that criticism takes from time to time. We have a frank recognition of Aristotle as a literary dictator, and are led to the excesses of a Rymer. More usually, Classical theory identifies itself with such things as "reason," "good sense," "nature"; there is a chain of common-sense manuals of poetic art—Horace, Vida, Boileau, Pope. Pope's *Essay on Criticism* reads like a chapter in the Book of Proverbs: in successive paragraphs the most diverse propositions of poetic wisdom are gnomically formulated, and always formulated brilliantly. At times we see an attempt to transplant the very meters of the Classical languages into modern vernaculars; or blank verse and rhyme debate their right to exist. We have an Academy set up as an institution of critical theory, and a Corneille who resists and then

[1] This appears clearly in Professor Saintsbury's *History of Criticism* (Dodd), more especially in the interchapters iv, v, vi.

succumbs to rules. Sidney makes uncompromising attack on the two main distinctions of Romantic drama—mixture of tones and complex plot—and yet is himself the first to hail Romance in the form of the popular ballad. Addison makes himself a vindicator of Milton, but must justify Milton by the example of Homer and Virgil. Dr. Johnson feels that Shakespeare is assuming the dignity of an ancient, yet has no hesitation in pointing out his many 'faults,' as indeed Addison had pointed out the faults of Milton. Dryden tacitly accepts critical orthodoxy, but is not for a moment prevented by his orthodoxy from recognizing whatever in literature seems good.

The set of the current is always toward creative freedom, and wherever this gains a step it is felt as an advance in the direction of the Romantic. Bishop Percy introduces into polite literature the Romantic element of the popular ballads. Celtic poetry gains a hearing in the Ossianic poems, however much these may have been touched up by Macpherson. A poet of the rank of Gray is inspired by Welsh and Scandinavian themes. Scott makes a bold move in an original direction, and this is hailed as Romantic epic. Side by side with all this it should be noted how, in the eighteenth century, Lowth discovers the foundation secret of poetic form in Biblical literature: henceforth, from Chateaubriand to Matthew Arnold, there is growing appreciation of the Hebraic side of poetry. And in Frederick Schlegel[1]—however fanciful his interpretations may seem to us—there is a genuine attempt to unify western and biblical and oriental literature, and the conception of world literature begins to appear. With Herder the idea of

[1] Everyone interested in the theory of the study of literature should read at least Lecture IV of Frederick Schlegel's *History of Literature* (Bohn's translation). While the details of his exposition may now seem out of date, the whole constitutes the most notable handling of the problem that makes the foundation of literary theory—the synthesis of Hellenic and Hebraic literature, oriental and western.

evolution in its full modern sense is formally applied to the literary field.

In the modern conception of poetry the triumph of free creation is absolute. It is a new attitude to literature: a recognition that art is a part of nature. Once more the keynote of the conception has been struck by Shakespeare, and once more the Shakespearean criticism comes in dramatic disguise. The passage has already been quoted where (in *Winter's Tale*)[1] the old King discusses art with the young Shepherdess, who sees that carnations are beautiful yet objects to them as artificial: the solution is that *nature is made better by no mean but nature makes that mean;* if art can mend nature, *the art itself is nature.* The principle gains full recognition in the Wordsworthian controversy, and the evolutionary theory of taste.[2] By this the traditional relations of criticism and creation are fundamentally changed. Instead of the principles of taste being dictated to poetry by theory from without, they are inspired from within; at each stage in poetic evolution it is the creative art that inspires the appreciative taste. Theory must follow poetry instead of leading. Instead of epic and drama being different kinds of literature, with their definitions fixed from the beginning, these are elements of poetic form, which may remain single or fuse together;[3] poetry is a thing of progress, and progressive arts must have progressive definitions. Of course, this does not mean that in art, any more than in nature, "whatever is, is best." The meaning is rather the converse of this—that whatever is best, is: whatever of art has real validity will maintain itself in the struggle for existence, however criticism may resist; what lacks validity, theory may leave to die out of itself. It does not follow that there is no place for literary theory and

[1] IV, iv, 85–97; quoted above, page 297.

[2] Above, chapter xii.

[3] Compare above, chapter ii.

criticism of judgment. Man seeks to modify nature, and lead it in the direction he desires. But the critic who in the same way seeks to modify art can do this only by critical principles which are themselves a part of nature. The theorist criticizes art at his own proper peril: the peril of awaking some day to find that a new Tennyson has turned his carefully reasoned theory into a mere anachronism.

With this conception of literature before us the four types of criticism seem at once to justify themselves. The Criticism of Interpretation rests upon the complete freedom of creative art: criticism simply follows literature, and interprets it as it is. Judicial Criticism, on the contrary, is criticism in restraint of creation. It is a survival of the Renaissance attitude, but a modified survival. It has passed through stages. First, we have judgment by Classical standards only. Then, there is recognition of modern literature, and judgment by Classical or modern standards. The varied possibilities of literature become more and more recognized, yet there survives the conception of judgment: it is judgment by fixed standards which it is the function of literary theory to determine. But, in the third place, literary theory is brought into harmony with the evolutionary spirit of literature: the old formal theory relaxes into a more tentative advance toward the philosophy underlying literature; and this has, in the present work, been denominated as Speculative Criticism.

Meanwhile, through all history, a vast amount of the best thinking has been concentrated upon the criticism of literature, falling into the most varied and even contradictory schools. Are we to understand that the great bulk of this falls to the ground, and only a small part proves right in the end? A fourth conception of criticism emerges, when all this criticism is taken as itself literature. What may be doubtful when considered as determination of the literature treated, may have full validity when considered as revelation of the reader of that literature.

And our conception of poetry was found to involve the responsive creation of the reader side by side with the productive creation of the artist. Subjective Criticism is the literary medium for expressing the reaction of literature upon its readers.[1] And such subjective criticism must take in all schools of thought: the fourth type of criticism rests as much upon the freedom of the reader as the first type on the freedom of the creative artist.

[1] Though Professor Saintsbury does not use the term "subjective criticism," yet the drift of his whole history seems to me to make a basis for what I am calling by that name.

CHAPTER XV

JUDICIAL CRITICISM: OR CRITICISM IN RESTRAINT OF PRODUCTION

Judicial criticism needs no lengthy description here: its general nature has been indicated sufficiently by antithesis with other types,[1] and it is the conception of criticism which is most in vogue at the present time. The critic appears as a judge: he makes pronouncements as to what is good and bad in art, what is better and worse; he lays down principles of correctness and points out faults; his positive standards enable him to make comparisons of merit between various works of art. It is thus often called the criticism of values. Or again, it may be described as criticism in restraint of production, in contrast with the criticism of interpretation; for if we can indicate anything in art as bad, or at least as inferior in value, we are so far restraining artists from perpetrating what is thus objectionable.

I fear that, of the readers who have followed this work to the present point, a large proportion will be disappointed with the results of this chapter. They ask, not without a show of reason: "What help will this chapter give us in obtaining sound principles for judging poetry? It is the most natural thing in the world to feel that particular poetry is good or bad, the thing desired is the grounds for such judgments; and if the past shows mistakes in literary estimates, there is all the more need for correct principles." Yet I fear I have little to offer of what they are thus expecting. The truth is, that the whole question of judgment in poetry and art is wrapped about by a misunderstanding, which I would seek to fix as the *fallacy of values*. A large part of philosophy is occupied with questions

[1] Above, chapter xiii, page 270; and again, pages 301–2.

of values. Here is a distinction between science and art: science is concerned with the positive determination of things; when such things appear in art, the question is, not of the things themselves, but of the values of these things. Thus much is clear: the fallacy is found when we pass from the idea of *values* to the idea of *valuations*. Of the total value attaching to something in art only a small part is capable of assayment and estimation, though such assayment and estimation have their importance. Art represents things (for example) in some particular medium: the artist must have mastered his medium before he can represent anything effectively. Such mastery of the medium, or technique, is a thing admitting of estimation with a considerable degree of precision. The fallacy of values lies in mistaking this estimate of the assayable value of a thing for the total art value. The painter's handling of light in a picture can be precisely discussed: but how can we make a valuation of light itself? How can we measure in value—

> Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
> Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
> Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine?

If we cannot express values for these elements of an art picture, still less can we measure the combination of all these. The popular craving for judgment in art rests partly on this fallacy of values, and in part is the product of our history, in which (we have seen) accident at one time made Classical art a fixed standard by which everything else could be measured; our ideas of the standards have widened, but the idea of measuring still clings to us.

Thus the fundamental question for this type of criticism is not so much the principles of judgment, which belong largely to technical study, as the limitations within which judicial criticism will be valid.

In the first place, judicial criticism has a distinct place in practical life. The enormous productivity of modern litera-

ture and art renders it impossible for any individual to come in actual contact with a thousandth part of what is produced: we need experts to sample literature for us, as we need sampling in more material things. The great field for this is the floating literature of journalism, and reviewing is a most important part of criticism. It is naturally judicial criticism: the application of generally accepted standards to the new literature that offers itself for consideration. The word 'judicial' suggests how this reviewing is a sort of professional cross-examination of literary claims; and it is a sound principle that nothing has ascertained value which has not been cross-examined upon. Of course, this reviewing has the weaknesses that are incidental to journalism in general. Of these the chief is its absolute irresponsibility: there is nothing to guarantee the examination of a book before it is reviewed. For another weakness of reviewing, responsibility belongs to the reader of reviews equally with the reviewer. Not in one case out of a hundred does the reader pass from the review to the book reviewed: hence what he comes to desire is an article racy and interesting in itself, apart from the question whether it gives any idea of the literature in question. The neglect of interpretation which vitiates criticism in general applies here also: reviewers have not learned how much more interesting they could be if they would interpret the literature as it is, instead of feeling obliged to pronounce upon it *ex cathedrâ*.

It may be a question how far judicial criticism has a place in education. By the very nature of education a teacher is a temporarily assumed standard. As Bacon's maxim[1] puts it, *Oportet discentem credere, edoctum judicare*. While the teaching process is going on you take on trust, when it is finished you decide for yourself. From such temporary standard pronouncements may come as to correctness and faults. Some teachers of literature, it is true, take a contrary plan: they would make the student himself the judicial critic, calling upon him to

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, First Book, section IV, 12.

estimate masterpieces and point out faults. I have great distrust of this device: it overlooks a characteristic of the student mind —that it is just the most immature who are the most judicial. Where it is a question of scoring the great masters, Freshmen rush in where Graduates tread with at least an approach to diffidence. All judgment implies a restraint of sympathy; it is not by hardening his heart that the young student will be initiated into the deep beauties of art. It is rather by a sort of infection that the teacher, who represents the taste of the past, brings new minds into contact with poetic beauty: when this stage is gained the poetry itself becomes the teacher.

A more important point will be the place of judicial criticism in the theory and philosophy of literature. Previous chapters[1] have laid the strongest stress upon the evolutionary view of taste: but the recognition of this does not exclude taste of a more static kind. It is noticeable how Wordsworth in his unfolding of the evolutionary view reserves this point. The doubt whether there are any fixed principles in human nature for art to rest upon seems to him a monstrous heresy, only worthy of his worst of critics, Adam Smith. But Wordsworth's exposition gives us something more positive than this. In making his distinction between merely passive taste and the sympathetic effort necessary to catch advances in poetic art, Wordsworth speaks[2] of the passive taste as sufficient "for such things as proportion and congruity." The words seem to point to what is a valuable distinction between two different elements that enter into art. One is what may be called a poet's conceptions; the other is the detailed processes by which these conceptions are carried into execution—all that roughly sums itself up in the term 'style,' or the larger view of rhetoric. Poetic conceptions seem to belong to the individuality of the poet; the other element is what this poet has in common

[1] Chapters x, xii.

[2] Compare above, page 263, or page 89 of George's edition of the *Prefaces*.

with other poetry. In this second element is seen a wide field for static taste. Judicial pronouncements may do little for evoking originality: they may have much to do with fostering the art processes by which originality may make itself effective. Yet here, as always, judicial criticism must speak under correction of individual genius.

We are naturally led at this point to a subject which has attracted much discussion—the question of authority in taste.[1] If we recognize the evolutionary character of appreciation, and the freedom of creative art, do we thereby exclude authority in matters of taste? The best answer is to seek a parallel from the region of things spiritual which comes nearest to art—the sphere of religion. In the heart of the Middle Ages faith was a thing of authority: the infallible church declared the orthodoxy, the civil magistrate punished the heresy as naturally as he punished moral delinquency. The revolution we call the Reformation has effected a fundamental change in these matters, and faith is declared free. Is this freedom of faith inconsistent with the idea of authority? As a fact, the greater part of Christendom today recognizes the authority of the mediaeval church, only with a difference: the authority must be voluntarily accepted, and the civil power cannot enforce it. The Protestantism that revolted from the mediaeval church set up for itself another infallible authority, that of a Bible, or creed. Those who today would reject alike the infallible church and the infallible creed will yet speak of spiritual authority in religion. Freedom of faith is not found to involve anarchy: only all authority must operate by voluntary acceptance. Is there here a parallel for authority in matters of taste?

There are two views of authority in art. The one sets up an institution, such as the Academy which so commends itself to French criticism, and which has been discussed in the well-

[1] A valuable statement of the issue is contained in Professor W. P. Trent's *Authority in Criticism* (Scribner).

known essay of Matthew Arnold.[1] It is a little difficult to be sure whether Arnold is advocating such a "sovran organ of opinion," or whether, in critical despair, he is recognizing how small a part of the totality of art would be subject to its authority. His argument seems to recognize some such distinction as that of a previous paragraph[2]—between the original conceptions of art, and the processes of art execution. No Academy can overrule individual creative genius. But authority can be made effective as against provincialism, individual extravagance, all of individuality in art which rests, not upon conviction, but simply upon lack of knowledge as to what others are doing. In any form a literary Academy is an embodiment of judicial criticism.

The other view of authority in taste—of which Mr. Courthope[3] may be a representative—sets up no institution, but stands for conscience in matters of art. Conscience in morals is the reaction of the common sense upon the individual consciousness: from the community of the past has come the germ of the conscience; it adapts itself to the growing individuality, yet must always be open to influences from outside. In the idea of a literary conscience we have a form of authority in taste that operates within the consciousness of the artist, and by his own consent. Here again appears a field for judicial criticism. Whatever seeks by generally accepted principles to clarify the art sense of the community is working toward conditions favorable for influence on individual genius. And individual taste is good taste only so far as it works under a sense of responsibility.

[1] "The Literary Influence of Academies," in the first series of *Essays in Criticism* (Macmillan).

[2] Above, page 320.

[3] W. J. Courthope's *Life in Poetry: Law in Taste* (Macmillan), page 191, and elsewhere.

Finally, in whatever field judicial criticism works, it must always work under two limiting conditions.

First: no judicial criticism can be of any value which has not been preceded by the criticism of interpretation. It is self-evident that pronouncements upon literature must understand the literature they touch if they are to be valid: and it has been made clear that the judicial attitude, however guarded, is so much restraint upon interpretative insight. The figure of justice is symbolized with bandaged eyes.

In the second place: judicial criticism of literature is a revelation of the critic much more than of the literature. When a reviewer offers an article upon "Tennyson as a Fifth-Rate Poet," we do not expect much light upon Tennyson, but we shall know all about the writer of the article. We have seen the history of criticism upon Shakespeare, Milton, and the like, with all its contradictions and fluctuations. Now, all through this history Shakespeare and Milton have remained exactly the same. What the history has given us is the history of the critics; we know Rymer, Voltaire, Johnson, Pope, Addison, by the reaction of Shakespeare and Milton upon each. It is the same with the valuations and orders of merit which come to us so ludicrously at particular points of literary history: the choice of poets in Johnson's *Lives*, or Pope[1] celebrating the rescue of fundamental laws of wit from Elizabethan barbarism by the trio Buckingham, Roscommon, and Walsh! Preferences, in the nature of things, rest upon the relativity of two things—preferrer and preferred—not upon the actuality of one thing. Mr. Saintsbury[2] may be quoted:

A phrase of Bossuet, which seems to French ears, even of today, the *ne plus ultra* of majestic melody, will strike very well-instructed

[1] Compare Pope's *Essay on Criticism*, lines 709 to the end. (The reader will probably need the aid of notes [e.g., in the Globe edition] to identify the trio.)

[2] *History of Criticism*, Volume I, page 199.

Englishmen as a rhetorical jingle; and French critics of enthusiasm and enlightenment will see no difference between the music of Moore and that of Shelley, or rather prefer the former. In the other sphere, what is to an Englishman a piece of dry humour will appear to a Frenchman a *saugrenu* monstrosity; and a Frenchman's ideal of manly eloquence, dignified or passionate as the case may be, will seem to an Englishman to show nothing but the maudlin pathos of a drunkard, or the petulant braggadocio of a child.

As long as we are observing literature, or interpreting, the literature itself gives objectivity. But value means value to some mind: in estimations of it the personality of the valuer is a factor in the process, and the judge is at the same time a party to the suit. No man can possibly escape from his own horizon, though he may enlarge it: the judgments he so carefully frames on literature and art may possibly reveal the literature and art, they will certainly reveal the man who makes them.

CHAPTER XVI

SUBJECTIVE CRITICISM: OR CRITICISM ACCEPTED AS LITERATURE

Our treatment of literary criticism would seem inadequate without a chapter devoted to Subjective Criticism. Yet the chapter may well be of the shortest: for when Subjective Criticism has once been recognized there remains little else to say. The term describes, not one branch of criticism, but the whole of critical writing considered from a special point of view. Criticism is literature discussing literature: other types have for their point of view the literature discussed; Subjective Criticism has its interest in the critic. By his act of criticizing the critic becomes an author: Subjective Criticism is the contribution of this author to literature. Our theory of poetry laid stress upon responsive appreciation side by side with art creation: the responsive appreciation that comes from successive readers makes a literature in itself. As Mr. Saintsbury says, likes and dislikes are facts in criticism: these facts make up Subjective Criticism. The rainbow of creative art has a secondary rainbow following with lesser illumination its whole arch. For every single poem, or work of productive literature, there comes a multitude of cross-lights upon it from every critical angle: these cross-lights upon literature enter into literature itself, and make a varied and independent interest.

There is surely no difficulty in discriminating between the two attitudes to a piece of critical writing: the one estimating it as an item in the whole of critical science, the other recognizing it as something which has literary interest in itself. I do not set high value (I must confess) upon Lamb and Hazlitt as revealers of Shakespeare; but I have the highest respect for Lamb and

Hazlitt as revealers of Lamb and Hazlitt, and Lamb and Hazlitt are well worth revealing. No one can differ more than I do from the pronouncements of Macaulay on literary matters, but I yield to no one in admiration for Macaulay. Let us dub him, if it must be so, as a rhetorician: I can see how the 'rhetoric' blurs the accuracy of his delineations, but I have never been able to see why rhetoric should not be an interesting and attractive form of literature. When we estimate soundness in a piece of critical writing, we are correlating it with a theory that advances with many fluctuations; and our insight into its final drift is not infallible. Meanwhile, the interest of what we read is a thing certain, and enduring. Prophecy is gratuitous, but it seems a safe prediction that, as literature progresses, the interest of personality revealing itself in literary form will grow stronger and stronger; and there is no way in which personality reveals itself more strikingly than in what appears as to the influence upon the particular personality of the world's great literature.

Is there anything to be said on the other side of the question? I can see three dangers attaching to this use of criticism: but in each case what is objectionable is not subjective criticism itself, but the attitude to it of the modern reader. In the first place, there is the danger of mistaking this for other types of criticism: reading, not for the interest of the discussion, but for the conclusions to which it may lead. This is a double injustice. It is an injustice to literature itself to substitute for its interpretation by honest effort the ready-made pronouncements of even the greatest of commentators. And it is injustice to such as Johnson, Pope, Addison, to measure them by their views of literature—which are in part the product of their times—and not by their own power of making views forcible, whether by a personal note of attractiveness, or by more general interest of style. Perhaps no great writer is more often wrong in his views than Dr. Johnson. Yet in subjective criticism the

interest of Johnson's work is of the highest. His personality he has made to impress itself upon the whole of his writing; and his style—of almost scientific exactness, yet with a crispness suggesting but stopping short of epigram—is a perpetual intellectual tonic.

It is almost another way of saying the same thing to point out, in the second place, how the enormous literature of criticism is largely responsible for the common vice of literary study by which *reading about* literature takes the place of the literature itself. This has special reference to poetry. It cannot be repeated too often how productive creation in art calls for responsive creation on the reader's part. When this is forthcoming it is indeed a "joy of discovery." But it involves effort: and the tendency to move along the line of least resistance easily substitutes for personal effort the discursive interpretations of past criticism. This danger is greater at the present time than ever before, since the volume of subjective criticism has been so largely swelled by journalism. The generation of readers formed by this inundation of subjective criticism seem conscious of a large literary culture: but it hardly occurs to them how nearly the whole of their culture is second-hand appreciation.

A third point may be noted of a more theoretic character. It seems to me that emphasis on subjective criticism has deflected literary study from the larger to the smaller interests of poetic art. Coleridge[1]—writing from the point of view of those who insist on "pleasure" as the description of appreciative response to literary art—has framed a striking, and much-quoted, definition of poetry. "A poem" (he says) "is that species of composition, which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth; and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated

[1] *Biographia Literaria*, chapter xiv.

by proposing to itself such delight from the whole, as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part." Now, the general literature of criticism may be seen to have bestowed much less attention on what Coleridge calls the "delight from the whole," and much more on the "gratification from the component parts" of poetry. The resultant of the many varieties of criticism in the past has been to divert attention from the matter of a poem—which involves its analysis as a unit—to its manner of treatment; and in this manner of treatment to turn more and more from broader kinds of beauty which all feel, to smaller *nuances* of expression which particular critics discover and emphasize. The set has been from the study of the substance to the study of the accidents of literary art, and further still to the most accidental of accidents.

Here, however, as in the other cases, the danger is only incidental to subjective criticism. The value of this kind of reading is self-evident; its dangers are such as each reader can avoid for himself.

CHAPTER XVII

THE PLACE OF CRITICISM IN THE STUDY OF LITERATURE

This work is concerned, not primarily with literature, but with the study of literature. At this point, when we can take a view of literary criticism as a whole, it may be well to say a few words about the position of criticism in the whole study of literature.

Literary criticism, in the broad view of it which has here been followed, takes us into the heart of the question what the study of literature ought to be. But it would seem that this question, at the present time, raises very little interest. The gentle reader is, not unnaturally, without plan in his culture. The academic world, laudably emphatic on thoroughness in execution, views with impatience discussion as to the philosophy of literary study. Yet philosophy is simply the theoretic side of what in its practical aspect is perspective: thoroughness apart from true perspective is as much a vice as a virtue. Now, it belongs to criticism to give the perspective of literary study. It is of the nature of a map: it would be ridiculous to substitute the map for the journey, but to set out on the journey without the map is only a degree less absurd. The position at the present time of criticism in literary study seems to me the reverse of what it ought to be. Literary criticism is made up of two elements: philosophic and historic. One is the attempt to arrive at theory of literature; the other is the succession of critical writings. Philosophic criticism is of fundamental importance: critical history has importance chiefly so far as it assists the philosophy of literature. Yet in the present state of the study, criticism appears in the form of critical history: interest in the philosophy of literature has almost disappeared. This last is only one manifestation of the foundation error in

this department of learning—that instead of the study of literature as a unit we have separate studies of separate literatures. The essence of philosophy is the relation of parts to the whole: a philosophy of literature is not to be looked for as long as the literature is being examined in separate sections by separate sets of students. On the other hand, the history of criticism has a place in academic schemes out of proportion to its real value.

No doubt, in any division of the field of learning, the presumption is that the history of the particular study has a place. But it is clear that this presumption applies with very different degrees of force to different branches of learning. To take a simple example: in the study of arithmetic the history of the study will not be made conspicuous. Such a total revolution has come about by the adoption of the so-called Arabic notation, that all outside this is, for ordinary purposes of study, irrelevant. The complete mathematician will know all about other modes of numeration; to the general student they will be hardly intelligible. How many readers of this book could multiply *ccclxxix* by *cclxxxvi?*—unless indeed they translate these expressions into Arabic figures, when the problem becomes the simplest of sums. It seems, then, that the history of arithmetic justifies the small place assigned in the study to arithmetical history. Similarly, it would seem that the actual history of literary criticism discredits the theoretic importance of this critical history. As we have seen, its starting-point is the work of Aristotle: great in itself, but somewhat premature as literary theory, and formulated from very restricted sources. The next important point is the misunderstanding at the Renaissance of Aristotle's position, and the impossible attempt to make this a binding standard for literature in general. The subsequent history of criticism is the stormy discussion involved in the attempt to escape from a false critical position. Only quite at the end of the history do the fundamental ideas of modern

thought find their way into conceptions of literary taste and the evolution of poetry. Here then, as in the other case, the general value of a line of study is discredited by the course of its history. The outline history of critical opinion is itself a part of the philosophy of literature; beyond this the critical texts fall into a secondary place. They have subjective value as so many items of literature. They have another kind of value: but this is outside literature, and belongs to history. In the history of the Renaissance, of France under Louis XIV, of the reign of Queen Anne, the critical writings of these periods are an element; in the history of the Greeks, or the French or the English, what these peoples at particular periods thought about poetry and drama is relevant evidence. But this is distinct from the value of the critical writings in their bearing on the conceptions of the literature. Our division of outer and inner literary study is pertinent to the question: the historic records of criticism belong, not to the intrinsic study of literature, but mainly to the literary side of history.

On the other hand, that part of literary criticism which leads up to fundamental points in the philosophy of literature makes the essential groundwork of the whole study. Impatience of this whole idea of literary theory is self-deception: no one can handle literature without revealing his philosophy of literature, which, from his never having thought about it, may be an imperfect philosophy, or a bad one. Let it be conceded that the main thing is to get into contact with the literature itself. But we are not in real contact with the literature if, displacing theory by subjective criticism, we are letting traditional ideas of others come between us and what we read. We are not in contact with the literature if we are reading without true principles of interpretation, or if some unfounded static idea interferes with our flexibility of appreciation, and prevents our seeing the poem in its own light. We are in the most favorable position for intimate contact with the literature if we have so far

conceived the unity of all literature as to be able to see the part in its relation to the whole. And all these things are just what makes the essence of literary theory.

I am not assuming that the principles laid down in the preceding chapters on the criticism of interpretation and judicial criticism, on the fundamental conception of poetry, on the boundaries between static and evolutionary taste, will recommend themselves to all my readers. But I submit that the questions these discussions have raised are questions which everyone who wishes to understand literature himself, or who, as a teacher, has the responsibility of inducting others into literary appreciation, will have to enter into and settle for himself, either in theory or by his practice. And to whatever conclusions on these questions he may have been brought, I shall take leave to call those conclusions literary criticism.

BOOK V

LITERATURE AS A MODE OF PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER XVIII: Story as a Mode of Thinking

CHAPTER XIX: Literature as the Criticism of Life

CHAPTER XX: Literature as a Higher Interpretation of Life and Nature

CHAPTER XXI: The Subject-Matter of Literature as Important as Literary Art

CHAPTER XVIII

STORY AS A MODE OF THINKING

In our consideration of poetry in its fundamental conception it appeared that poetry was both a mode of philosophy and a mode of art. It is possible to review these two functions of poetry, and indeed of literature in general, separately. This will be the subject of the Fifth and Sixth books of this work.

The nucleus of creative literature is story. A story lies at the back of every single drama or epic, and story may enter largely into the poetry that is lyric. Such story is an end in itself: a thing of beauty needing no further justification. But story is also a means to an end, a vehicle for conveying philosophic thought. We can imagine the Schoolmen, in a spasm of their philosophic curiosity, inquiring what would have happened to the world if one of our first parents had eaten of the forbidden fruit, and the other had not. In their hands the inquiry would have been a tempest of discussion, in which abstract principles would be tossed to and fro. But it is clear that this problem—if it must be discussed—might equally well have been raised by making up an imaginary story to the effect that this occurred, and that under these circumstances a child was born to these parents: such a child, born of one parent who was innocent and one who was guilty, would be a concrete embodiment of the question at issue, and the adventures of this child would be a concrete embodiment of some solution to the question. Similarly, a previous chapter has shown how a delicate piece of creation like the White Lady of Avenel reveals, on analysis, abstract speculations as to elemental existence, and holds the whole Rosicrucian philosophy in solution. This principle of story as a mode of thinking is universal. There is,

it is true, a wholesome prejudice against 'stories with a purpose': but this is because—with the wide prevalence of the author fallacy—the phrase is understood to imply a conscious purpose in the author; and if a creative author is consciously dominated by a philosophic motive there is so much less room for artistic inspiration. In reality, what makes a problem drama or problem story is that, irrespective of the author, the personalities and incidents presented do in fact raise problems of human life. It is impossible to construct a story touching things human which does not involve underlying conceptions of life; if the author so intended, then the story *reveals* his conceptions of life; if he did not so intend, his conceptions of life are *betrayed*. Thus story by the manner of its execution connects with art: by its matter, with philosophy. The concrete life resolved into its underlying abstract principles must always yield thought that is philosophic.

The best discussion of such a principle is the application of it to particular cases. This I have elsewhere done on a considerable scale.[1] The present work is concerned with literary theory: and the present chapter will take up theoretic points implied in the conception of story as a mode of thinking.

I

The word 'mythology' of itself suggests story as a mode of thinking. The early study of mythology was a branch of literary study, inquiring into myth-making as a phenomenon of primitive literature. In our own time the study has traveled far outside literature: modern mythology, as seen in the researches of a Grimm or a Frazer, attempts to interpret the mind of antiquity reflected in language, folk-lore, popular cus-

[1] My work on *Shakespeare as Dramatic Thinker* is wholly devoted to this purpose, and in all I have written—on the Bible, Shakespeare, the Ancient Classical Drama—a large part has been occupied with analysis of ideas underlying imaginative pictures.

tom, rites and ceremonies, as well as in poetry. The early mythology was a study of literary origins. It suffered severely from the 'premature methodization' which erects single bases of interpretation into complete sciences. Thus successive schools of mythologists arose: one school would persuade us that all myths were attempts to explain phenomena of external nature; another school would rest them all upon a disease of language; yet another school would, with Mr. Andrew Lang,[1] see in myths echoes of popular customs that had become obsolete. It is abundantly clear that all these bases of origination—and many more besides these—will have validity in application to particular myths. But when we review poetic myths as a whole, it would seem that the word 'myth' is simply a variant of story. The story of Prometheus or of Persephone we call a myth; the story of Odysseus and Penelope we do not call a myth. The distinction is one that belongs purely to criticism: myth is story considered in its function of suggestive interpretation. If the tale of Persephone, in addition to the story interest of a fair maiden and a dark monster and a sorrowing mother, can be so shaped as to suggest the annual miracle of summer and winter, the story becomes a myth. Or, by virtue of a play upon two meanings of the word *daphne*—a laurel tree, and dawn—the mere story of a nymph escaping her pursuer by transformation into a tree can be given the additional interest of suggesting the coloring of dawn swallowed up in the growing sunlight, with a hint of the laurel tree as consecrated to the worship of the sun-god: here again a story is elevated into a myth. The distinctiveness of a myth is part of general poetic suggestiveness. And the fact that such myth-making should characterize primitive literature, and disappear in later stages, requires no further explanation than the fact that creative poetry is the universal literature of the primitive world: it must thus satisfy, in its own mode of

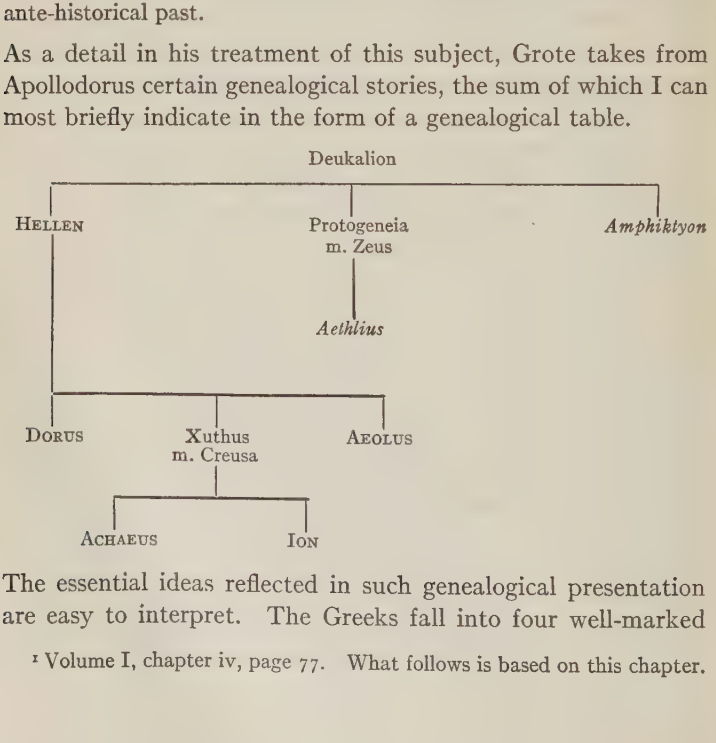
[1] *Custom and Myth* (Harper). Cox's *Introduction to Mythology* (Holt) and the writings of Max Müller will represent the other schools.

creative thinking, the embryonic instinct of speculation which, when fully developed, will demand a new literary medium of science and philosophy.

The prehistoric stage of history—if such an expression may be permitted—is largely occupied with myth-making. A particularly simple illustration of the myth as story in its interpretative function is afforded by the use of genealogy to convey ideas of race connection. As Grote in his *History of Greece*[1] says:

> Every association of men, large or small, in whom there existed a feeling of present union, traced back that union to some common initial progenitor. . . . . A series of names, placed in filiation or fraternity, together with a certain number of family or personal adventures ascribed to some of the individuals among them, constitute the ante-historical past.

As a detail in his treatment of this subject, Grote takes from Apollodorus certain genealogical stories, the sum of which I can most briefly indicate in the form of a genealogical table.



The essential ideas reflected in such genealogical presentation are easy to interpret. The Greeks fall into four well-marked

[1] Volume I, chapter iv, page 77. What follows is based on this chapter.

and kindred races—Dorians, Aeolians, Achaeans, Ionians; but for all their distinctiveness they are conscious of their common Hellenism. This is expressed in the creative mode of genealogy, and a genealogy which makes Hellen of an earlier generation than the founders of the four races. But there is more than this. The genius of Greek life is that the separate communities and races work out their separate careers, but they have two "holding points in common": all sections join in the half-yearly 'Amphiktyonic Assembly' at Delphi or Thermopylae, for religious and social purposes; and all join in the Olympic and other festival games. Accordingly, two more names appear early in the genealogy: Amphiktyon (Neighbor), and the 'Aethlius' which suggests to a Greek ear the game contests. Nothing else appears in the table, except the name Protogeneia (Firstborn), which is a mechanical link, and the names Xuthus and Creusa, which introduce legend of a different kind. Here then we have genealogy as a creative veil for local or racial connection in mythologic story.

In antiquity the most prolific of all myth forms was the metamorphosis story: a poetic type that disappears from later art. Incidents of this kind are just calculated to give scope for the double effect—the intrinsic interest of story, and the further interest of interpretative suggestiveness. Thus, in every poetic metamorphosis there are two distinguishing points. One is a *tour de force* of realistic ingenuity in describing the act and process of transformation. Take the familiar instance of Baucis and Philemon, the aged couple who are all the world to one another, and who have received from the gods the boon that neither shall survive the other. When the moment of fate comes—

> Old Baucis is by old Philemon seen
> Sprouting with sudden leaves of sprightly green:
> Old Baucis look'd where old Philemon stood,
> And saw his lengthen'd arms a sprouting wood:

New roots their fasten'd feet begin to bind,
Their bodies stiffen in a rising rind:
Then, ere the bark above their shoulders grew,
They give and take at once their last adieu;
At once, "Farewell, O faithful spouse," they said,
At once th' encroaching rind their closing lips invade.
Ev'n yet an ancient Tyanaean shows
A spreading oak, that near a linden grows.

As we read we thoroughly understand what it feels like to change into a tree. But the last couplet brings the other interest of meditative suggestion. All human existence seems fleeting in comparison with the eternity of external nature. The blissful union of husband and wife, which death must interrupt, stands eternally symbolized in the oak and linden swaying to the same breeze. It is the sentiment of human transitoriness, put in contrast with the eternity of external nature, that gives the main suggestive interest to poetic metamorphosis in the hands of an Ovid.

It is otherwise where metamorphosis appears in the Norse legends which William Morris has reconstructed into his *Sigurd the Volsung*. There is the same realistic ingenuity concentrated on the process of transformation. The great passage in which Sigurd and Gunnar exchange personalities is too elaborate for quotation here; but we may take the simpler case of Signy and the witch-wife:

They went to the bower aloft
And hand in hand and alone they sung the spell-song soft:
Till Signy looked on her guest, and, lo, the face of a queen
With the stedfast eyes of grey, that so many a grief had seen:
But the guest held forth a mirror, and Signy shrank aback
From the laughing lips and the eyes, and the hair of crispy black:
But though she shuddered and sickened, the false face changed no whit;
But ruddy and white it blossomed, and the smiles played over it;

And the hands were ready to cling, and beckoning lamps were the eyes,
And the light feet longed for the dance, and the lips for laughter and lies.

But the interpretative significance of metamorphosis is here quite different from what we have seen before. The whole poem is saturated with the idea of evolution—an evolution of things stretching over many eras, of which the era of the gods is only one. A single phase of this evolution has to do with the outer shapes of men-folk, which are always the "images of the hearts that abide within them." In earlier eras these outer shapes were variable and flitting: so that Otter the hunter, as he sleepily gazed on the world of fishes, changed into the outer shape of an otter watching his prey. But when the gods came all was fixed, each semblant to each kind. Thus the metamorphoses brought about by aid of witchcraft or spells, which play so important a part in the action of the poem, appear merely as reversions to an earlier stage of evolution. Metamorphosis is "the craft of the kings of aforetime," "the craft that prevaileth o'er semblance": it is simply that the clock of evolution is for the moment put back. Here then the myth becomes an expression of philosophic speculation.

There is no need to multiply illustrations of myth as story with significance: how the myth of Prometheus, in Aeschylus' tragedy, is made to shadow an evolution from the earliest steps of human civilization to what is made a climax in the mysteries of mantic art; how the Fury-haunted house is a myth veiling the modern problem of heredity; how the story of Circe has obvious moral suggestiveness, in its picture of an enchantress whose victims sink into the animal. One point needs emphasis: that in dealing with mythologic interpretation we must be ever on our guard against overstatement. It is not accurate to speak of a myth as an attempt to 'explain' external nature. The craving for 'explanation' is a later instinct, born with

the philosophy or science in which it finds expression. In the myth there is, at most, a delicate poetic suggestiveness, pointing in a direction which carried farther will be explanation. And there are degrees in mythologic suggestiveness. Wonder is the seed of knowledge: the wonder story seems distinct from the myth. I have elsewhere[1] dealt at length with the remarkable case of the *Odyssey:* all the stories that make the resolution of the plot are simple stories of adventure, whereas the stories making the complication are all wonder stories. The interest of such wonder stories is an adumbration of the coming interest of mythology. And mythology is an adumbration of the further interest of philosophic speculation.

II

Myth-making belongs to an early age of literature, and soon passes away. At the other end of the historic scale we find another kind of story-telling which we call fiction. Etymologically, poetry and fiction are the same: the words are Greek and Latin equivalents for the same idea, that of creative art. But there are connotations of the word 'fiction' which are significant. It belongs, by usage, to the later literary development in which prose and verse are on equal terms as vehicle of creative art. Again, fiction suggests conscious invention, in contrast with the tradition which was the matter of earlier poetry. And fiction applies specially to the later era in which, alike for drama and epic, the emphasis has been shifted from interest in plot to interest in the life portrayed. Mythology, we have seen, points faintly in the direction of a philosophy yet to come; in the era of fiction philosophy and science are established in full strength. What we have now to note is that this fiction, in addition to its proper function of creative beauty, has a

[1] *World Literature*, pages 141–47; compare above, chapter vii, pages 138–42.

further interest that associates itself with the interest of philosophy. In particular, we may call fiction the experimental side of human philosophy: it holds the same position in the discussion of life that is held by experiments in natural science.[1]

This is an altogether different matter from Zola's plea for a 'naturalistic fiction,' that should serve as the physiology and morbid anatomy of modern life.[2] It is no question of any particular type of novel. The position taken is that always, and in the nature of things, poetry and fiction, in addition to what other purposes they may serve, constitute the addition of experiment to observation in the literary treatment of life.

At the threshold of the argument we stumble upon an unfortunate confusion of words that is widely spread—the confusion that makes the word 'fictitious' almost a synonym for 'false.' In some walks of life I have known parents restrain their children from reading novels through fear that this "might make them grow up untruthful." And many readers who would smile at such a remark may yet, if they examine themselves, find that at the bottom of their heart they think of fiction as a sort of permissible falsehood. This misuse of words is part of a still more fundamental confusion—to which attention has often been called, yet the misunderstanding persists—the confusion of FACT with TRUTH. I have myself known worthy persons grow morally indignant when it was urged upon them that fact was not the same as truth. One wonders how people like these look upon the parables of Jesus. No one supposes these parables to be records of facts: does anyone hold them as

[1] My *Shakespeare as Dramatic Thinker: A Popular Exposition of Fiction as the Experimental Side of Philosophy* is devoted to this subject. (The same line of thought is followed in my Introduction to a little work, *Four Years of Novel Reading* [Heath]; the rest of the booklet is an interesting account of the attempt made by a local literary society to carry this into practice.)

[2] Compare the treatment of Zola's position in Sidney Lanier's excellent work on *The English Novel* (Scribner), pages 28 ff.

other than the highest truth? The parable is simply one form of fiction used as a means of conveying truth.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the two ideas of FACT and TRUTH belong to different circles of thought. Fact is not truth, though it is something which can be made into truth. Not to speak of other differences, facts have relation to particulars; truth is general. I tap my writing-table with my finger and find it hard: there is a fact. It is not a truth: to get a corresponding truth I must be able to generalize, as (for example) when I say that hard surfaces make themselves perceived by the resistance they offer to our muscles. The opposite of true is false: the converse of fact is some other fact. If it had been the case that on tapping my table I did not find it hard, this would be because I found it soft, or warm, or sticky. Facts are raw material which by generalization can be manufactured into truth: but they are equally the raw material of falsehood. The popular epigram has it that there are three degrees of lying: positive, white lies; comparative, black lies; superlative, statistics. But statistics are facts; and it is easy to conceive a large body of statistics, all correct as facts, which could nevertheless—say, in the hands of the wrong political party—be worked up into monstrous falsehood. If then facts are raw material of either truth or falsehood, so fictitious details are raw material of truth or falsehood. The difference between facts and fictitious details is that facts are particulars *that happen to have happened:* fictitious details are particulars that might happen, would happen, must happen under certain circumstances. What differentiates the facts from the details of fiction is an element of accident.[1]

[1] This has been laid down from the beginning by Aristotle. "It is not the function of the poet to relate what has happened, but what may happen, —what is possible according to the law of probability or necessity. . . . . Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular."—*Poetics*, ix (Butcher's translation).

The confusion is aggravated by the circumstance that language has no word that is exactly antithetic to 'fiction.' Fiction is a term of literature, fact is a term of science. The exact antithesis is between fiction, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the literature that *limits itself by facts*. Biography, for example, and history, these in contrast with fiction are forms of literature that are supposed to limit themselves by facts. When this distinction is made, we get the paradox that fiction may be truer than literature of fact, in the sense of containing more of truth. Take a biography of some great personage (in which we may assume that there are no misstatements), and place beside this a fiction biography, such as *Esmond*. Then we may say that the fiction contains, bulk for bulk, more of truth than the biography. For, however great the subject of the biography might be, yet it would inevitably happen that a large number of details of his life were accidental, or particular to him, without general significance; the biographer must bring these in because his allegiance is to fact. The novelist has no allegiance to fact, and has no motive for introducing any details that are not of general significance. Thus, the biography contains truth mixed with considerable amount of alloy in the form of unrelated particulars; the fiction is the pure gold of general truth without alloy. I say that the fiction *may be* the truer: of course, the real principle is that fiction is truer, or falser, than the corresponding literature of fact: but in each case more potent. Liability to error belongs alike to both types; the difference is that the literature of fact is a more limited instrument for obtaining truth.

The main point of the present argument is that the difference between the literature of fact and the literature of fiction is analogous to a distinction well understood in natural science—the distinction between scientific observation and scientific experiment. Of course, experiment is itself an extension of observation. But what we call observation in natural science is

observation exercised upon things of nature as they happen to exist all around us; experiment modifies the existing arrangement of things so as to obtain conditions most favorable for observation. It is unnecessary to add, that there is no escaping from nature: the modifications are just as much a part of nature as the state of things left unmodified. But the whole progress of science rests upon this power artificially to bring about a set of circumstances likely to yield a principle. A chemist wishes to explain the behavior of two gases when they meet; if he is limited to what happens to be going on in actual nature, he might have to transport his audience to the bottom of the sea, or to the depths of the earth's crust, and when at the right spot the students might be unable to follow the process amid the general complexity of nature. What the chemist does is to "make up" an experiment: bringing the two gases into the artificial position of two retorts, with artificial pressure, and artificial electric sparks instead of nature's slow change of weather: at once a reaction is visible, and a principle of chemistry is made clear. Similarly, in the study of human life, biography and other literature of fact is observation of life as it has happened to be in the past, an observation that will include accidental particulars; fiction is a modification of actual life, extending observation to selected situations of affairs, to conditions instinctively chosen as favorable to the revealing of underlying principles. To "make up" a story is to make up an experiment in the science of life.

An objection has been taken to this analogy that for a moment looks plausible. The scientific experimenter, it is said, may so far resemble the novelist that he makes up a problem: but the novelist makes up the solution also. This is a mistake, based upon misunderstanding of creative art. It is an example of the common confusion between freedom and arbitrariness. An expert musician sits down to extemporize on his piano; a non-musical person, watching him play without a score before

him, supposes that such playing is purely arbitrary. But let the non-musical person try for himself: there is nothing to prevent his sitting down and darting his fingers here and there at will over the keyboard: only what he produces does not come out as music. The expert was not limited by another man's composition: but there was a more powerful restraining force upon him—his own musical faculty. There is a similar difference between the man of creative imagination in literature and the reader who lacks it: the novelist cannot, as the other fancies, put into the story "just what he likes." It was a novelist who said, "When someone knocks at my hero's door, I do not myself know who is going to come in." The *Old Curiosity Shop* first appeared in serial literature extending over a long period. As the story drew near to an end, and circumstances seemed to point to the death of Little Nell, it is said that Dickens received hundreds of letters from all over England beseeching him to spare Nell's life. But Dickens, at that point of the story, could no more spare Nell's life than he could tell a lie; or than a physician could make a patient recover because he loved him.

The analogy between fiction and experiment in science is complete. Anything of the nature of experiment falls into two parts: the bringing together of data, and reaction from these data. Both the creative writer and the scientific experimenter are alike arbitrary in choice of data: when the data are brought together, each becomes a passive reporter of what takes place. The chemist can select his subjects or experiment and arrange the conditions: then nature does the rest. The novelist is purely arbitrary in his choice of what conditions to set up: whether he shall introduce innocence into a tainted society, or bring Mephistophelean intrigue into contact with purity, or what further modifications he shall introduce: but when the data become complete, the author is helpless, and can only describe what nature does. But, persists the objector, he may describe

nature wrongly. So may the chemist. Controversies arise in chemistry, not because the facts of experiments are misstated, but because the results of the experiment are wrongly interpreted. The argument is not that fiction is infallible, or that in any degree it has immunity from error. Error is a question of the performance. What is maintained is that the fiction which can select freely conditions of life is a more potent instrument of truth than the forms of literature that limit their observation to the accidents we call facts.

But the principle under discussion hardly comes out in its full strength until it is associated with another principle, distinct, yet closely related. The same natural science which relies so largely upon experiment also makes free use of scientific apparatus. The astronomer scarcely looks at the stars: all his astronomical theorizing is done upon *images* of the stars, obtained for him by his transit instrument, or his spectroscope, or other kinds of apparatus. Now, it is highly significant that we call poetry and fiction works of *imagination:* the creative faculty is conceived as a sort of lens, focusing human phenomena for better observation. When we speak of the 'philosophy of Shakespeare' we do not mean, necessarily, that Shakespeare is a philosopher. It is the reader or commentator who has the comparatively easy task of philosophizing: 'Shakespeare' is the name for a great body of observations on human life, made by an instrument of extraordinary powers, as if a vast collection of telescopic observations had been got together on which astronomic theory could work at its leisure. Hence it is that, while Homer and Shakespeare remain the same, the philosophy of Homer and Shakespeare is continually enlarging, as successive generations with advancing theoretic powers study the pictures of life creatively collected for them. And a thinker on life who rejects poetry is like a scientist cutting himself off from all that he cannot see with his own unassisted eyes.

It may be a very difficult question of psychology to say exactly how the creative faculty works. No one will suggest any analytic purpose or conscious plan for the poet. Analysis and plan belong to the interpretation of the product: the producer is conscious only of imaginative beauty. The sense of character and the sense of plot seem to be selective instincts, piercing through the haze of non-significant particulars to the elements of life closely relevant to principle. And imagination—whether an inferior degree of the same or something different in kind—is required on the part of the reader of poetry and fiction. Genius is an endowment of the few, and seems to have the power of taking care of itself; appreciative imagination, on the contrary, is a thing that needs development by education.

It is just here that we are able to see why the fundamental principle of literature for which we are contending is so slow in obtaining general recognition: the mistake as to the relations of fact and fiction we find established—where we should least have looked for it—in the traditions of our education. Let the reader take the time-tables of our schools and universities, let him note the particular studies that enter into them and the time devoted to each, and let him strike the balance: he will see how nearly the whole is consecrated to studies founded on facts, and how small a percentage is made by studies involving imagination. True, literature, and even poetry, has its part in the curriculum; Shakespeare is read in every school and Homer in every university. But even these are made studies of fact, rather than disciplinary stimulus to imagination. The position of the digamma in the text of Homer, the approximate order of Shakespeare's plays, these are academically more important than the power of entering into the beauty of the poetry and its significance for human life. There seems to have been a perversity in the way higher education has persistently shirked the question of training the imagination: in its treatment even of the most poetical of poetry still hankering after what will

reduce to statistical form, and looking suspiciously upon appreciative imagination as—in academic slang—a "soft snap." In contrast with this, scientific education lays chief stress upon laboratory work, which shall at once give scope for the expert to prosecute investigation by experiment, and bring the elementary student, by going over the experiments of others, into the very heart of scientific truth. On the Humanities side, university education seems to regard development of creative faculty no part of its function, and to doubt whether the study of beauty will lend itself to examination marking. The turning-point in the history of natural science came when science added experiment and apparatus to mere observation. Some such revolution in the Humanity studies may be hoped for when education shall realize that fiction is as important as the literature of fact, and shall recognize the task of training the imagination.

Once more, then, we find fusion between the ultimate elements of literature: creative poetry is brought into relation with the philosophy that belongs to prose. But to say that poetry and fiction are the experimental side of human science is not to say that this is their whole function. The creative element in fiction gives it special freedom from the confinement to facts of life which happen to have happened, such as makes the limitation of certain prose studies. But when poetry and fiction have fully served this purpose of reflecting life for philosophic observation, there remains over and above this their natural function of pure creation for creation's sake. The ultimate appeal of poetry and fiction is not to philosophy but to beauty.

III

Story, then, is life in the concrete: the analysis of this into underlying principles gives philosophy. But the process of analysis is full of perils; and it must be conceded that in the

past the analysis of poetic literature, especially in application to Shakespeare, has yielded a considerable amount of questionable philosophy.

One foundation principle must be laid down: that the plot of a story is the only key to its underlying philosophy.[1] Story, like every other work of art, is a unity in diversity; the content of art differs from reality by the relativity of its details, and each detail of a story has significance in relation to all the other details unified by the plot. A story is a microcosm, of which the author is the creator, and the plot the providential scheme in the light of which the separate parts are to be understood.

Among the fallacies arising out of the neglect of this fundamental principle the most common is the *fallacy of quotations:* the attempt to construct a philosophy of Shakespeare or Euripides by copious quotations from the plays. Wise sayings can be found in abundance: but it is obvious that these give us only the wisdom proper to the imaginary persons represented as speaking them, not the wisdom of the drama or of the poet. It is curious to see how widely this fallacy obtains. Preachers have been known to take as text for a divine message the words of Satan in Job, or—what is only a degree less absurd—words of the three Friends who are rebuked by God for having said the thing that is not right. Apparently, the reliance is on the mass of quotations: it is like the old woman who lost on every article she sold, and only by quantity could hope to make a living. Though each separate saying represents a mind other than Shakespeare's the sum of the whole is expected to come out as Shakespeare. It was by quotations of bitter sayings that old-fashioned classical scholarship presented Euripides as a woman-hater. It is safe to say that no one who ever approached Euripides from the side of plot, and studied the part woman is

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Thinker*, pages 5ff. The whole book is an illustration of this thesis.

made to play in the construction of his stories, could ever obtain this perverse view.

We have, again, the *fallacy of ethical system:* elaborate systems of ethics are constructed, by writers who are stronger in philosophical proclivities than in literary insight, and the plays of a Shakespeare are drawn into conformity with these systems. Here there is, on the face of it, a reversal of all sound method: the analysis of the plays must come first, and construction of ethical theory later. But in all such analysis there is the further necessity of taking each play as a separate entity. As I have shown at length elsewhere,[1] the play of *Richard the Third*, taken by itself, presents a universe founded on the sole conception of retribution from which there is no exception. When we turn to such a drama as *Romeo and Juliet*, we have a world in which all things work together toward what is almost the negation of retribution—the moral accident that disturbs the conformity of character and fate.[2] Each story has a providence of its own. It is, of course, possible that the ethical ideas suggested by separate stories, each for itself, may be found to draw together into something of a philosophical system: but for such a philosophy the responsibility rests upon the commentator, and not the poet.

A minor fallacy of the same kind is what may be called the *definition fallacy*—the tendency to mistake between a single poetic motive and a limiting definition. Aristotle's doctrine of *Katharsis*[3]—the effect of tragedy to "purge" the emotions of

[1] *Shakespeare as Artist*, chapters iv, v; more briefly in *Shakespeare as Thinker*, pages 39–45.

[2] Compare *Shakespeare as Thinker*, chapter iii.

[3] *Poetics* vi, 2, gives the definition of tragedy in which this word plays a great part: compare chapter vi of Mr. Butcher's edition for the varieties of interpretation which in literary history have been put upon this idea of "purging." One of these views (Butcher, page 255), viz., "to purify and clarify them by passing them through the medium of art," is an interesting illustration of one of the theories of art discussed above, pages 241–42.

pity and terror; or his doctrine of *Hamartia*[1]—the tragic interest of a personality brought to ruin, not by the evil in him, but by some slight deviation from perfection; or Mr. Meredith's conception of comedy:[2] all these are excellent or vicious according to the use made of them. If they are put forward as single motives in dramatic analysis, they become illuminating principles. If (as usually happens) they are taken to be limiting definitions of what tragedy or comedy ought to be, then they are static ideas in conflict with the natural evolution of poetry, and will be contradicted again and again by what tragedy and comedy are seen to contain.

It will be said that integral parts of a story—particular personalities or incidents or effects—are also life in the concrete, and call for analysis. This is true: but the material on which such conceptions are to be based must always be referred to the plot which binds all together.

Such story material, for example, has an interest in its relation to the antithesis of inner and outer, character and manners. Caricature does not mean clumsy character-painting. Manners and character are two distinct literary interests: the one, mere surfaces of personality, making part of the spectacle of life; the other, outward manners interpreted into more or less of probability in the light of inner motives. At one end of a scale we have the 'humors' which Ben Jonson loves to present[3]; at the other end is the Ibsen social drama, or novels depending solely on character interest. Between come the many novelists and dramatists who combine the treatments; especially Shakespeare, Scott, and Dickens. Dickens is perhaps the most notable of these three, because his canvas is so crowded with figures. It is a shallow criticism that would call Dickens a caricaturist.

[1] *Poetics*, xiii, 3: compare Mr. Butcher's valuable discussion, pages 319 ff.

[2] *Essay on Comedy* (Scribner).

[3] Compare especially Prologue to his *Every Man Out of His Humour*.

The technique of his novels seems to select for a central personage some David Copperfield or Florence Dombey, normal, perhaps commonplace, with whom the largest number of readers will be in sympathy. Attached to such central character are others—like Florence Dombey's father—abnormal, it may be, but fully revealed. Other characters are related to the central personage as heroes or villains of some tragic plot—like Edith Dombey or Carker the manager: in this capacity they are fully exhibited, but only in this aspect. Other personages have a smaller part in the whole action of the story, and are proportionately less delineated: Mrs. Skewton, the juvenile old woman; Joe Bagstock, the blunt flatterer. On the outskirts of the action there are crowded together what are seen as mere surfaces, scratches of manners-painting—Captain Cuttle, inseparable from a glazed hat; Jack Bunsby, with his eye forever on the coast of Greenland; Mrs. MacStinger, in the act of chastizing her offspring and setting them on the pavement to cool. Thus life, in Dickens' novels, is presented to the central personages of the story as life in reality is seen by each one of us: a center of character as fully revealed as one's own consciousness, and round this concentric circles of decreasing individuality, ending in an horizon of unexplained 'humors.' So generally, the analysis of a particular character involves, among other things, the degree to which, in the economy of the plot, the personality is allowed to display itself.

From this interest of character and manners we must distinguish another interest reflected in such terms as tragic, comic, farcical. This is, technically, interest of tone.[1] And tone is a particular aspect of plot: it is the emotional perspective in which the material of a story is presented. It is a mistake to think of tragic and comic as emotional qualities attaching to the experience portrayed. *The Comedy of Errors*—apart from

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Thinker*, pages 9–10, or chapter x; *Shakespeare as Artist*, chapter xviii from page 343.

Aegeon—is full of the richest comedy: yet the actual experience of Adriana and Luciana and the two Antipholuses is, to these personages themselves, acutely painful; it is to the spectator, who sees this experience in the perspective of the whole plot, that the effect is comic. It is upon the spectator that the mixture of tones in a drama is brought to play.

To sum up: the matter of story presents life, not in the casual connection of things we call reality, but life focused into a perspective of which the plot of the story is the formulation. It is this arrangement in perspective that brings the life presented close to philosophic principle. To ignore plot is to see the life out of drawing. When principles of analysis like this have been fully observed, then it appears how rich story is in the philosophy of life. In the great phrase of Bacon, the truth of being, and the truth of knowing, are one: differing no more than the direct beam and the beam reflected.

CHAPTER XIX

LITERATURE AS THE CRITICISM OF LIFE

Matthew Arnold was bringing a valuable phrase into the currency of common speech when he described literature as the criticism of life.[1] By 'criticism' Arnold understands the power of seeing things as they really are.[2] Such is also the function of science. But the science which so markedly distinguishes the modern world from the world of antiquity is bound up with specialization; the observation—comprehensive and minute—on which science rests is impossible except by the division of the field between co-operating bands of specialists. Such specialization is incompatible with what is meant in Arnold's phrase by 'life.' Where human life becomes the subject of scientific treatment—in biology, sociology, psychology, and the like—only single aspects of life are considered, one at a time. It is the synthesis of all these separate aspects that is expressed by our use of the word 'life' in the full sense: as when we speak of 'seeing life,' or when we use the great saying—

Homo sum, nihil humani a me alienum puto.

There is no possibility here of specialization: life in this sense we should have to murder in order to dissect. Accordingly literature, which is the mother country from which special studies have passed out as colonists, retains its dominion over the criticism of life. And it must be an unspecialized philosophy which performs this function: the instrument of observation would not be made truer by restricting itself further than the matter to be observed will admit. Poetry and prose, creation

[1] In his Introduction to *Ward's English Poets* (Macmillan).

[2] Compare his *Essays in Criticism.* First Series (Macmillan), page 1.

and discussion, with all their varieties, must co-operate in the literary treatment of life.[1]

In primitive literature, which is the stage common to all particular literatures before they have differentiated, the philosophy of life has already begun. It manifests itself in the proverb, or gnome, which remains to the end the only philosophy of the uneducated classes. A proverb is a unit of thought in a unit of form. Each is a separate and independent observation made on human life: the word 'aphorism' suggests how each, so to speak, has an horizon of its own. Even if there be no other prose or verse form, the epigrammatic character of the proverb has the effect of form. Such proverbs then are natural crystals of wisdom. They maintain themselves, and multiply through all subsequent phases of literary advance. Of the national literatures that associate themselves with our world literature, it is perhaps Spanish literature that is richest in this primitive wisdom: Sancho Panza is its prophet, and his discourse—when he feels himself at home—becomes little more than aggregations of such wisdom crystals.

And if your high and mightiness does not think fit to let me have this same government, why so be it; it may be for the good of my conscience to go without it. I am a fool, it is true, but yet I understand the meaning of the saying, The pismire had wings to do her hurt; and Sancho the squire may sooner get to heaven than Sancho the governor. There is as good bread baked here as in France, and Joan is as good as my lady in the dark. In the night all cats are grey. Unhappy he is that wants his breakfast at two in the afternoon. It is always good fasting after a good breakfast. There is no man has a stomach a yard bigger than another; but let it be never so big, there will be hay and straw enough to fill it. A bellyfull is a bellyfull. The sparrow speeds as well as the sparrow-hawk. Good serge is fine, but coarse cloth is warm; and four yards of the one are as long as four yards of the other. When the hour is come we must

[1] The matter of this chapter runs parallel with, and is an expansion of, part of chapter vi.

all be packed off; the prince and the prick-louse go the same way at last; the road is no fairer for the one than the other. The Pope's body takes up no more room than the sexton's, though one be taller; for when they come to the pit all are alike, or made so in spite of our teeth; and so good-night, or good-morrow, which you please. And let me tell you again if you don't think fit to give me an island because I am a fool, I will be so wise as not to care whether you do or no. It is an old saying, The devil lurks behind the cross. All is not gold that glisters. From the tail of the plough Bamba was made king of Spain; and from his silks and riches was Rodrigo cast to be devoured by the snakes, if the old ballads say true, and sure they are too old to tell a lie. . . . . As for the governing part, let me alone: I was ever charitable and good to the poor, and scorn to take the bread out of another man's mouth. On the other side, by our Lady, they shall play me no foul play. I am an old cur at a crust, and can sleep dog-sleep when I list. I can look sharp as well as another, and let me alone to keep the cobwebs out of my eyes. I know where the shoe wrings me. I will know who and who is together. Honesty is the best policy: I will stick to that. The good shall have my hand and heart, but the bad neither foot nor fellowship.[1]

When we come to literature in its full development, the philosophy of life appears, firstly, in wisdom literature. The supreme example of this type is the wisdom literature of the Bible. In this we can trace most clearly—as I have shown at length elsewhere[2]—the rise of the different literary forms of wisdom. We have aggregations of independent proverbs; then—especially in Ecclesiasticus—we see proverbs clustering around leading topics, and so passing, by stages, to the full form of the essay. The proverb couplet is the meeting-point of prose and verse: there is development, on the prose side, into the maxim, the essay, and the rhetorical encomium; on the verse side, into the epigram and the (Biblical) sonnet. Hebrew

[1] Motteux' translation.

[2] *Literary Study of the Bible*, chapter xiii. Wisdom literature is also discussed in the Introductions to the successive books of wisdom in the *Modern Reader's Bible*.

wisdom naturally oscillates between creation and reflection. We have here the grand personification of Wisdom, which has produced some of the greatest poetry in the world. It is in this that we catch most clearly the identification of moral order with the sustaining order of the external universe; by this personification the interpreting principle of life becomes itself a vital thing, and we seem to have come upon the living soul of philosophy. Biblical wisdom is interesting, again, as presenting a closed circle of thought. The four books, Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, Ecclesiastes, Wisdom of Solomon—for Job, as a drama, stands apart—give us wisdom as passing through distinct stages. First, there is a stage of calm: adoration of the wisdom of the whole universe, combined with shrewd analysis of details. Then there is a stage of crisis where—in Ecclesiastes—analysis applied to the whole breaks down in skepticism, and wisdom changes to vanity. There is a final stage of triumph, when the idea of life is enlarged to immortal life, and Wisdom reappears as Providence. It may seem only a detail, but it is a very interesting detail, that our last view of Biblical wisdom gives just a glimpse of further development:

> For himself gave me an unerring knowledge of the things that are: to know the constitution of the world, and the operation of the elements; the beginning and end and middle of times; the alternations of the solstices and the changes of seasons; the circuits of years and the positions of stars; the natures of living creatures and the ragings of wild beasts; the violences of winds and the thoughts of men; the diversities of plants and the virtues of roots. All things that are either secret or manifest I learned: for she that is the artificer of all things taught me, even Wisdom.[1]

In these enumerations we have a rhetorical foreshadowing of the analytic sciences.

In the Classical literatures the course of wisdom is different. The starting-point is the same: Greece has its seven Wise Men,

[1] Wisdom of Solomon 7:17.

with their gnomic sayings. But at an early stage Greek wisdom was diverted in two different directions. On the one side it passes, through the transition stage of Plato, into analytic philosophy, continuous with the philosophy of modern times. On its practical side, Greek wisdom is absorbed into oratory, that wide literary area in which so much of the productions of Greek and Latin writers is comprehended: this is the application of literature to the business of life. At a later stage we have the wisdom literature of Seneca's writings, and the exquisite essays of Cicero on Friendship and Old Age. At its very close Classical wisdom returns to earlier forms in the essays of Epictetus, and especially the sayings of Marcus Aurelius which, for so many centuries, made the wisdom of Europe.

The wisdom stage of philosophy is characteristic of oriental civilizations. In Indian literature, as in Greek, there has been an elaborate and subtle analytic philosophy. But the Vedantic philosophy stands entirely outside our world literature. On the other hand, Indian wisdom—from the original Vedas to the last poem of Sir Rabindranath Tagore—is readily assimilated by the western mind. A similar remark applies to Arabic or Chinese wisdom. And Persian poetry—through the mediating interpretation of Fitzgerald—has given the world perhaps the greatest of all wisdom poems in the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.

In the modern world wisdom literature abounds—all but the name. This is surely the true designation for that large class of poetry of which, perhaps, *In Memoriam* is the best type; which includes great part of the poetry of Wordsworth and Browning, and of many lesser poets. Such a poem as Browning's *Easter Day* illustrates how poetic wisdom can fluctuate between reflection and creative story. But indeed modern wisdom literature has a flexibility of form that defies analysis.

Satire is the comic counterpart of wisdom. Mediaeval life, in which there was so large a reversion to floating literature,

gives us the two types symbolized where some ruler of men appears with the *Spruch-sprecher* on his right hand, and the Fool on his left:[1] the Sayer of Wise Sayings, and the Fool, alike pour out wisdom. The institution of the Court Fool is simply wisdom disguising itself in cap and bells. Even comedy, as Mr. Meredith says, is thoughtful laughter. But in literary evolution—as a former chapter[2] has shown—pure comedy is the later stage: the earlier stage is always satire. Greek iambic dances, Latin *saturae* or hodge-podge, the mythic dramas of Epicharmus, Aristophanic and great part of Roman comedy, all have their basis in satiric attack; only gradually does the satire take a second place as caricature, and pure comedy come to the front. The realities of life cast grotesque shadows when the light of wisdom is thrown upon them: such shadow play is satiric comedy. In the other kind of satire, of which Juvenal is the grand type, the spirit is different: the philosophy of life has now grown bitter, and ridicule is flavored with hate. But the basis of this hate is wisdom. The very coarseness of such satire is, at bottom, a clumsy tribute to decency.

The philosophy of life appears again in the great literature of personality, with all its varying forms. This belongs especially to modern literature. The personality of the earlier world —as Mr. Posnett[3] points out—was objective, and an individual was important in proportion as he revealed his clan or other social unit; as time goes on the center of interest shifts more and more from the aggregate to the individual. Even history will include lives of the great personages who have swayed events: with Plutarch's *Lives*[4] we get the interest of comparative personality, and it was through Plutarch that the world of

[1] Compare Sir W. Scott's *Talisman*, chapter xi.

[2] Chapter viii, pages 166, 173.

[3] Posnett's *Comparative Literature* (Kegan Paul), page 131.

[4] Compare my *World Literature*, pages 391–95; and for this whole paragraph, chapter viii of that work.

the Renaissance was introduced to the world of antiquity. As a sequel to this we have the literature of character-sketching: with masterpieces like the English *Microcosmography;* the maxim writing of the French La Bruyère and Rochefoucauld, and of the Spanish Garcia; the self-revelation of Montaigne, and the chatty philosophy of Addison. The essay is fully established as an organ of personality; and a large class of lyric poems are subjective lyrics—crystallizations of a momentary sentiment, expressions of a single personal situation. Biography enlarges from lives of historical personages to lives that are interesting as so many studies of life; such biographical matter will take in familiar letters and diaries—all of them documents for interest in human life. Formal sciences like psychology and ethics can deal only with generalities: the literature of personality is a sort of distributive ethics and psychology, all necessary if the philosophy of life is to be made complete. The growing minuteness with which individuality is studied reaches a climax in the sense of humor. Humor—as distinct from other provinces of laughter—rests distinctly upon the smaller peculiarities of personality.[1] This humor is a world in itself: an invigorating contemplation of clashing individualities, in which the philosophy of life has become a sport. It is at once a form of literature, and an element that interpenetrates all other forms; the only danger is lest humor, like a weed, should kill all other literary interests.

The literary philosophy of life extends to take in the whole of creative literature. The previous chapter has discussed at length how story is a mode of interpretative thinking; how fiction, for secondary function, serves as the experimental side to the science and art of human life. It is, of course, a sound instinct that regards its inherent beauty as the foremost use of creative literature. And it is true (we have seen) that the philosophic analysis of fiction has proved liable to serious errors

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Thinker*, chapter x.

and fallacies. Still, traditional errors of interpretation cannot affect a fundamental principle of literature. The errors are imperfections in the practice of interpretation: we must learn to spell before we can read in the field of poetic philosophy. Short cuts to the philosophy of drama and story will lead usually to philosophic bogs. On the other hand, the undervaluing of the interpretation of life latent in creative literature has brought great impoverishment to literary study.

Finally, we have seen how the evolution of literature, beginning with a floating literature that is oral, reaches completeness with a floating literature of periodical writing—journalism in all its multiple forms.[1] Here we have one more organ for the philosophy of human life; an organ just fitted to catch the flimsy or evanescent elements that are beyond the range of more solid literature. What seem otherwise the deficiencies of journalism, from this point of view become so many virtues—its ultra-miscellaneousness, its ephemeral character: the reflection of life finds here an instrument as flexible as the thing with which it deals. Only an instrument like this can shoot the passing folly—or wisdom—as it flies. When the present time shall have become a time long past, it is safe to predict that students of the philosophy of life will turn to the reflection of our days in the days' papers, more readily than to other kinds of literature, for light on the character of our age.

[1] Compare above, chapter i, pages 21, 25 ff.

CHAPTER XX

LITERATURE AS A HIGHER INTERPRETATION OF LIFE AND NATURE

The criticism of life implies the power of seeing life as it actually is. But the range of literature as the philosophy of life goes beyond this to a higher interpretation, which enhances as it interprets. It might be asked, Is not the phrase 'higher interpretation' a contradiction in terms? if we are enhancing are we not so far ceasing to interpret? The objection would hold good in what was only the criticism of life. But literature includes creation as well as criticism. It is by virtue of its creative power that poetry imparts of its own to what it touches; confers on it enhanced values, yet such kind of values as are consistent with the function of interpreting.

The first form which this higher interpretation takes is expressed by the word 'idealization.' It is a word of extreme beauty: a legacy to modern speech from the old philosophy of ideas, which reigned through the Classical period, and, passing through the mediaeval controversy of realist and nominalist, was brought into contact with modern thought. The essence of the original philosophy was that the actual things about us were varied and imperfect copies of archetypes that belonged to a higher sphere of existence. In part, no doubt, this philosophy was based upon misapprehension. The Greeks were a people of a single language; they lacked the illumination that comparative study of languages casts upon the nature of language itself. They were thus always in danger of mistaking between words and things.[1] The modern mind has no diffi-

[1] Compare *World Literature*, page 19; or Bryce's *Holy Roman Empire*, chapter vii.

culty in seeing that there are no such things as blackness and length; that these are abstract terms in the classification which distinguishes between black and white things, things longer and shorter. In the realist and nominalist controversy one party insisted that these abstract ideas had a real existence independent of the things in which they were manifested; the other party insisted that they were only names used in the process of classification. The philosophy may have passed away; but in literature it is imperishable through the word 'ideal' which it has left behind it. It is open to us to study classes of things, searching through actual variations and imperfections to the archetype or ideal of each class. If these archetypes have no existence of their own, poetry can create them, and give them ideal existence. To idealize is thus to create: but it is also to interpret, for it is by study of the whole class that we arrive at its archetype. To call a man an angel may be to enhance, for angelic is a higher order of being than human; but it is not to interpret, for the two orders of being are diverse. On the other hand, to study the whole class of mankind with its infinite variations till we arrive at an ideal conception; to be possessed—in Seeley's great phrase[1]—with the enthusiasm of humanity that can trace the type in the imperfect realization of it: this is idealization, and idealization is the great work of poetry. It is to be noted that idealization is bound up with classification. To idealize is not simply to improve; for example, by taking a thing out of its class. If Shakespeare gives us ideal purity in Mariana and Isabella, he equally gives us ideal villainy in Richard the Third: had the play ended with the conversion of Richard he would have been so much the less ideal. Good and evil, and the countless varieties of each, and the interplay of all these varieties in actual life—these things, each in its kind, are the subject-matter of idealization; and such idealization is the higher interpretation of each.

[1] *Ecce Homo* (Macmillan), chapter xiv.

The higher interpretation appears, in the second place, in the poetic handling of nature. Nature is the name given to external things, including man himself, regarded as the entourage of the thinking mind, the sphere in which individual consciousness moves. This nature is interpreted by science in its own analytic way, such as resolves the rainbow into a form of prismatic action, and must bound its whole view by nature as it is. On the other hand, poetry by its creative power transforms the things of nature: yet only by aid of such ideas as the things of nature themselves evoke, so that the transformation is also interpretation. Thus man stands to nature in the position of a creator. Tradition tells how man himself is by the supreme Creator formed out of the dust of the earth, with the spirit of God breathed into him: poetry presents to us nature with the spirit of man breathed into it. We think of the eighth psalm as the grand charter of man's creative power over the world of nature. The psalm presents man as the viceroy of God: the Creator of the mighty heavens has made man—in comparison with these heavens a mere babe and suckling—his representative. For man himself a note of humility is struck:

> When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
> The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
> What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
> And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Yet to this man is delegated God's sovereignty over nature.

> For thou hast made him but little lower than God,
> And crownest him with glory and honour.
> Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;
> Thou hast put all things under his feet:
>
> All sheep and oxen,
> Yea, and the beasts of the field;
> The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,
> Whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

The dominion is not limited by material uses: part of man's sovereignty over nature is to re-create. Thus, in the spirit of Sir Thomas Browne's saying quoted before,[1] the work of creation did not cease with the sixth day: the creation of the universe is still going on, and man is creating poetic nature.

This is not the place to deal in detail with the poetic interpretation of nature, a topic so admirably handled by such writers as Shairp[2] and Biese:[3] how man insinuates into nature itself his own exhilarating appreciation of open-air life; how he makes nature the setting for his own historic feats or individual experience; how he colors the features of nature with his own emotions, or, by parables, makes things of nature spiritual symbols; how by all shades of personification he raises impassive nature into a conscious being with a soul of its own. Perhaps no element of poetry is more universally grasped and appreciated than the poetry of nature.

There appears to be only one word to be said on the other side. The poetic treatment of nature has been somewhat discounted through the influence of a phrase made current by Ruskin, when he applies the term 'pathetic fallacy' to the instinctive sentiment which feels the gloom of twilight, or speaks of the sighing wind and the melancholy ocean. The phrase has been misunderstood. The only fallacy is where the observer of nature so colors it with his own personal emotions that he loses the power to see it truly as it is. Here there is illusion: and illusion (we have seen) is foreign to poetic and all other art. Some such illusion appears in the conventional treatment of nature which pervaded poetry so long: stock epithets of an

[1] Above, page 297.

[2] J. C. Shairp's *Poetic Interpretation of Nature* (Houghton). I would repeat that in ail this part of the work I am under great obligation to this book.

[3] Alfred Biese's *The Feeling for Nature* (translation published by Routledge).

earlier time—which had once been genuine—came between real nature and the poets of the age of Pope and Johnson, and they babbled of nature beauties which they themselves would have been incapable of seeing. Hence the cry for a "return to nature." It is only when true observation of nature unites with creative coloring that we have the higher interpretation.

A third sphere for the higher interpretation is found in prophecy—if only the word be rightly understood. No word has suffered more from the wear and tear of usage. In the speech of today prophecy means no more than prediction; and this usage has even induced a false etymology, as if the *pro-* in prophecy was the *pro-* that means 'beforehand.' In the true etymology it is the other *pro-* that means 'in place of.' The prophets of the Hebrew world were those who spoke in place of God, interpreters of the divine. And so to the Greek the Muses are prophets of Apollo: the essential spirit of poetry speaks through the variety of poetic forms. The prophetic literature of the Bible, like other literature, contains predictions: in this case the accident of meaning extruded the essence, and the word prophecy has passed into almost irremediable eclipse.

When we examine the spirit of prophetic literature—in the Bible or elsewhere[1]—we see how *prophetic* is, in the spiritual sphere, the correlative of *poetic* in the sphere of art. Prophecy is spiritual idealization: it interprets life, not merely as it is, but in all its spiritual possibilities. It energizes what it touches, yet not so as to change it into something else, but to develop it according to its own inherent law. Prophecy differs from wisdom by its dynamic power; stoicism can interpret the moral life, but has no dynamic to make the interpretation prevail. Classical thought had its age of gold: but a golden age placed in the remote past could be only an idealized picture. Hebrew

[1] For the general conception of prophecy compare the *Modern Reader's Bible* (one-volume edition), pages 1388 ff. For detailed discussion see *Literary Study of the Bible*, chapters xvi–xx.

prophecy, placing its ideal in the future, brings dynamic power to create a golden age. Satire can powerfully depict the evil side of life: prophecy, bringing to bear upon life both passion for righteousness and quickened sense of actual evil, raises the ideal of redemption as a supreme inspiration. And so in modern—or other—times we rightly call such men as Carlyle and Ruskin and William Morris the prophets of their ages: yet none is entitled to the name who does not first interpret truly the age to which he belongs, and then add to his interpretation the rousing power which works for the age's elevation. Thus here, as in the other cases, we have the power to discern truly combining with something beyond itself: it is the fusion of criticism with creation that gives the higher interpretation of nature and human life.

CHAPTER XXI

THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF LITERATURE AS IMPORTANT AS LITERARY ART

We are concerned at this point with literature considered as a mode of philosophy. The word 'philosophy' expresses an attraction to a certain *sophia*, or wisdom, to which perhaps the nearest counterpart in our modern speech is the word 'interpretation.' It appears, first, as interpretation of life in action, or conduct. This widens to contemplation, contemplation alike of life and the external universe. Contemplation intensifies into analysis. When analysis is extended to the totality of things, it inevitably involves specialization and the unlimited subdivision of the field. Philosophy thus becomes a loose expression for a bundle of independent sciences; or, philosophy itself takes on a scientific function, and becomes the *scientia scientiarum*—the science occupied with correlating the results of other sciences. Meanwhile, philosophy is one of the six ultimate elements of literature;[1] elements not mutually exclusive, but entering into combination and fusion. Philosophy readily embraces the two other elements of prose: history collects the materials which philosophy in the stricter sense is to correlate; and oratory—in the wide sense of the word that includes exposition—is the adaptation of the results of philosophy to different audiences. Philosophy further enlarges to take in creative literature: for story (we have seen) is a mode of interpretative thinking, and story embraces epic and drama and part of lyric poetry. Lyric poetry apart from story is a meditation differing from the meditation of prose philosophy only by admitting freely a creative element. It would thus seem as if philosophy

[1] Compare above, chapter i, pages 17–20.

would be coterminous with literature. But there is a distinction: that philosophy is concerned with the content and subject-matter of literature, as distinguished from literary form and art.

It has been a note of the traditional study of literature that it has tended to lay the emphasis on the art and manner of literature rather than on its content and subject-matter.[1] The tradition began with the Renaissance, which sought to make a single literature the determinant of all the rest. But as, naturally, the matter of other literatures would differ from the matter of Classical writers, it was the art and form of literature which made the field of comparison. Literary culture thus became a spirit of connoisseurship: in literary, as in other art, the tendency of the connoisseur is to lay more and more stress upon the mode of performance, leaving the subjects treated to the general public that is not sensitive to refinements. The change comes where art is conceived as a part of nature:[2] comparisons of kind become more significant than comparisons of merit, and in the variety of literature lies its richness.

The comparative method, when once it is freed from questions of competing merit, and applied to differences of kind, is the most powerful of all instruments for enlarging and quickening receptivity. It was the comparative study of languages which brought home to the mind what language really was; a similar service is rendered to literary matter by comparative reading. I have dealt with this subject elsewhere.[3] A simple example is found where some topic—say the Alcestis story—is studied in versions coming from diverse poets, in diverse literary forms, and gathered from different literatures. Or, take the versions of the Faust story.[4] What is in essentials the same

[1] Compare above, chapter xvi, pages 327–28.

[2] Compare above, chapter xiii, page 296; and below, Conclusion, pages 491–92.

[3] *World Literature*, chapter vii.

[4] Discussed at length in chapter v of *World Literature*.

story has come to us from the Renaissance era, represented by Marlowe, from European culture at its highest point in Goethe, from the peculiar Spanish viewpoint of Calderon, from modern mysticism in the splendid poem of Philip Bailey. The comparative study of these versions may almost be called a liberal education in itself. The point is not merely that the particular topic is elucidated, but that all these different eras become illuminated by watching the reaction upon each of a single pregnant theme. And there is here, of course, no question of competing merit: it is a comparative study in the subject-matter of poetry.

The thought and matter that underlie literature are susceptible of historic or scientific or other treatment; but the literary presentation has a potency of its own. Mediaevalism can be reconstructed by historic analysis: but in Dante we have the very soul of the Middle Ages.[1] The Homeric poems crystallize for us a primitive civilization of the highest order,[2] for which there is no history except archaeological notes. I have elsewhere[3] dwelt at some length upon the remarkable poem, the *Kalevala:* how it restores to us a stage of evolution all but lost to history, a stage in which reality and imagination have no separating line, and animism reigns throughout: the genius of the poem makes us able to live and breathe amid these strange surroundings. We may generalize: a national literature is the nation's autobiography, its history speaking to us direct with its own best voices. And world literature is the autobiography of civilization.[4]

It might be objected that, while the forms of literature are in their nature eternal, the subject-matter enters into the category of things progressive, where each new stage of progress

[1] Compare *World Literature*, chapter iv, pages 180 ff.

[2] Compare *ibid.*, page 108.

[3] *Ibid.*, pages 333–50.

[4] Compare *ibid.*, chapter x.

makes previous stages obsolete. But this is a half-truth: it takes no note of the important distinction between two kinds of knowledge—the knowledge that is theoretic and the knowledge that is imaginative. This distinction has been so finely delineated by Seeley that I am impelled to quote—only abridging at points, because the drift of Seeley's argument has reference to an issue with which we are not here concerned.[1]

There are two ways in which the mind apprehends any object, two sorts of knowledge which combine to make complete and satisfactory knowledge. The one may be called theoretic or scientific knowledge; the other practical, familiar or imaginative knowledge. . . . . In order of time the second kind of knowledge has the precedence. . . . . Before the stars, the winds, the trees and plants could be grasped scientifically and the laws which govern them ascertained, they had been grasped, and as it were appropriated, by the human mind experimentally and imaginatively. The latter kind of knowledge was in some respects better than the former. It was more intimate and realised, so that, as far as it was true, it was more available. For practical purposes, accurate scientific knowledge of a thing is seldom sufficient. To obtain complete practical command over it you must take possession of it with the imagination and feeling as well as the reason, and it will often happen that this imaginative knowledge, helped very slightly by scientific knowledge, carries a man practically further than a very perfect scientific knowledge by itself. . . . . Moreover, this kind of knowledge is more attractive and interesting, and so has a more powerful and modifying influence upon its possessor than any other kind, for the simple reason that it takes hold of the most plastic side of his nature. . . . . [When Science comes] the mind passes under a new set of impressions, and places itself in a new relation to the Universe. . . . . In order not to be misled by feeling, it has been forced artificially to deaden feeling; lest the judgment should be misled by the impressiveness of the universe, it arms itself with callousness; it turns away from Nature the

[1] *Natural Religion* by the author of *Ecco Homo* (Macmillan), chapter iii, pages 46–52. I wish to express my deep obligation to the whole of this great book.

sensitive side, and receives the shock upon the adamantine shield of the sceptical reason. In this way it substitutes one imperfect kind of knowledge for another. Before, it realised strongly, but scarcely analysed at all; now, it analyses most carefully, but ceases in turn to realise. As the victory of the scientific spirit becomes more and more decided, there passes a deep shudder of discomfort through the whole world of those whose business is with realising, and not with testing knowledge. Religion is struck first . . . . but poetry and art suffer in their turn. . . . . We may look forward to a time when . . . . a new reconciliation shall have taken place between the two sorts of knowledge.

When the distinction of the two kinds of knowledge has been laid down, it becomes clear that literature, in the most general sense, is the organ of the fuller knowledge, the knowledge which apprehends with the imagination and sympathy, and in which we make personal appropriation of what we understand. To knowledge in this sense no subject-matter ever becomes antiquated. Literary study becomes a foreign travel, into all ages and among all peoples: not—like science—for the purpose of making discoveries, but with a view to that personal contact with others which is the enlargement of ourselves.

Literature, then, by its matter is in close affiliation with philosophy; by its mode of treatment, with art. It would be deemed the very narrowest of literary study that should treat the content of literature as if it were only philosophy, and ignore the element of art. It is an equally narrow conception of the study that makes the whole a question of literary art, and overlooks that literature is also a mode of philosophy.

BOOK VI

LITERATURE AS A MODE OF ART

CHAPTER XXII: The Grammar of Literary Art

CHAPTER XXIII: Plot as Poetic Architecture and Artistic Providence

CHAPTER XXIV: Poetic Ornament: Theory of Imagery and Symbolism

CHAPTER XXV: Literary Echoing: The Conception of Literature as a Second Nature

CHAPTER XXVI: Language as a Factor in Literary Art

CHAPTER XXII

THE GRAMMAR OF LITERARY ART

No argument is needed to prove that literary study includes the recognition of literature as one of the fine arts. To this side of the general subject this Sixth Book is devoted. The mode of treatment seems to be conveyed by the expression, 'the grammar of literary art.' We are familiar with the grammar of language, the grammar of music, the grammar of Greek art. By a similar usage of the term 'the grammar of literary art' will indicate analysis applied to the elements and effects of literary art from the theoretic point of view.

Traditionally, the discussion of literature from the art side has been left to such studies as poetics and rhetoric. These titles go back to the age of Aristotle. But it must be remembered that at that period the classification of studies was not well established: thus the modern reader of Aristotle's *Poetics* is astonished to find a considerable section of it devoted to the linguistic grammar of our school books.[1] There will be much in common between the studies so named and the grammar of literary art. But the point of view is different: the interest of grammar is theoretic, the other studies are concerned with technique and the practical application of literary art. To a large extent the *Poetics* of Aristotle is a manual of composition. And rhetoric from the first has been made a practical art—the equipment of the professional orator for his daily work, though there has been a gradual modification in the conception of rhetoric, until it can almost mean literary appreciation. To me it seems that there is real value in separating the theoretical and the practical treatments of art. In a modern manual of

[1] *Poetics*, chapters xx–xxii.

rhetoric a large space will be given to tropes and figures of speech, to the detailed exposition of such things as metonymy, synecdoche, apostrophe, irony, hyperbole, and the like. All this will be serviceable to practice in style, which is applied literary art; it will be like the 'exercises' by which the pianist or violinist develops his technique. But all this yields little to the theory of literature: such things sum up as the application of specific means to specific ends, or as the economy of force. Grammar, on the other hand, is a matter of theory. Whether it be the grammar of literary art, or the ordinary grammar of linguistic usage, we may say that no man by such grammatical study will add one cubit to his stature as poet or expositor; though perhaps some poetry or exposition has been dwarfed by the lack of it.

A more serious objection to the terms 'poetic' and 'rhetoric' is that the distinction of these seems to rest largely upon what in this work I have maintained to be a capital error of traditional literary study—the confusion of the distinction between verse and prose with the distinction between poetry and prose. Aristotle was the first to warn against this confusion:[1] but it has become vastly more serious in our time, when the larger half of creative literature is expressed in prose. It would of course be possible to discuss separately modes of creative and modes of discussional literature; but it seems doubtful whether there would be any advantage in the separation. One element in literary art is description: it is clear that what goes to make effective description will to a very large extent be the same whether the description is to be in prose or in verse, whether it is to be part of creative poetry or rhetorical exposition. Most of the elements claimed for poetry have their counterparts in discussional literature. The simile is supposed to be a great poetic weapon: but in final analysis it is difficult to separate this from the illustration or analogy in the exposition of prose. Metaphorical

[1] Compare above, chapter i, page 13.

language enters into creative and discussional literature. Even geometry cannot entirely evade metaphorical language. Its metaphors, truly, are of the faintest: yet a mathematical 'radius' is a metaphor from the spokes of a wheel; the 'hypotenuse,' or the 'line subtending an angle,' is perhaps a veiled metaphor from stretching a carpet beneath a tent-pole; it is impossible to 'superimpose one triangle upon another' except in a metaphorical sense; the very word 'geometry' is a metaphor from land-surveying. When, on the other hand, literary art is treated as an unbroken whole, there is a clear advantage in seeing how much there is in common between literature in verse and literature in prose; or, again, between literature of discussion and literature of creation.

The most convenient method for the grammar of literary art is that which is described by the technical term 'topical': intermediate between the disconnected notes of the commentator and the complete system of methodization. The chapters that follow deal with some leading topics in literary art. Within each separate topic there may be room for something of systematization. But the time has not come for a system of literary art as a whole; and any attempt at this would call for a complete treatise.

One caution may be added. Art resolves into two elements: interest of design, and human interest. The first lends itself readily to analytic treatment, but human interest will often defy analysis. Thus, in taking up the grammar of literary art it is well to recognize the limitations of the subject. There can be no complete analysis for a thing of beauty. Some tenth or hundreth part of the whole beauty is all that admits of explanation: yet this modicum of analytic explanation seems worth while.

CHAPTER XXIII

PLOT AS POETIC ARCHITECTURE AND ARTISTIC PROVIDENCE

The most fundamental point in literary art is interest of plot. A story, as a work of art, is unity in diversity: the more diverse the details the richer the art, provided that all the details are felt to lie within a comprehending unity. Plot seeks to formulate this in application to particular cases: to state the general drift of a poem in language of design gives us the interest of plot. From this point of view plot is the architecture of poetry. But a story also has human interest. Viewed on this side plot is, in the sphere of fiction, what in the world of reality one man will call Providence, another man will call law: all things are conceived as parts of one significant whole. Each particular story is a microcosm, with the poet for creator and the plot for its scheme of law or Providence. But the two aspects of plot are closely related. Design and human interest in art are inseparable: thus the underlying scheme that makes the Providence of a story must appeal to the sense of beauty. It is a common error to think of 'poetic justice' as demanding something juster than the justice of real life. On the contrary: if retribution (for example) works itself out with mechanical exactitude, the justice at once ceases to be 'poetic'; what makes it poetic is that—juster or less just—it comes about in ways which appeal to the artistic sense in us.[1] Plot is at once poetic architecture and artistic Providence.[2]

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 44–46, 381–84. For detailed discussion see Index to that work under word "Nemesis." Compare also B. Worsfold's *Principles of Criticism* (Longmans), page 72 and chapter iv as a whole.

[2] A formal discussion of plot is contained in chapters xix and xx of *Shakespeare as Artist*. The Appendix contains some plot schemes. Plot as the

At the outset certain cautions and distinctions suggest themselves. We must not lay too much emphasis on the formulation of a plot. Each particular poem becomes a problem, of which the unknown quantity is the plot: we must always hold in reserve the possibility of $x=0$. Yet the attempt to formulate is helpful, as forcing upon us the perspective without which we cannot have artistic impressions. Again: if we hear plot defined as consisting in a rising and falling action, with elements of exposition and exciting cause and catastrophe, we must be suspicious: this may admirably describe one particular kind of plot, but plot in general will be as varied as human invention. We must be prepared to distinguish between simple and complex plot: as with the distinction between unison and harmony, complex plot will resolve a work of art into elements each one of which has interest of design. The ignoring of this idea led criticism for a long period to pronounce Shakespeare dramatically impossible. Another important distinction is that between plot and movement. The first is the work of art conceived as a scheme: movement takes up the design in progression from beginning to end of a poem. In simple works the two may be identical: the plot lies in the movement. In more elaborate works they may be distinct. They are different aspects of the same thing, and movement is, so to speak, the architecture of progression.

I

Reduced to its lowest terms, plot appears in the *point* of an anecdote or joke: even this is felt to unify some diversity. Someone tells a funny story: the last word is hardly spoken

basis of philosophical analysis is the subject of my other work, *Shakespeare as Thinker:* see especially pages 5–10. Its Appendix is devoted to technical analysis of Shakespearean plot, with plot schemes for all the plays. In *The Ancient Classical Drama* discussion of plot occupies a considerable space; it may be followed by consulting the General Index under the word "Plot."

CHART XXII

Interest of Plot

Plot as static design: formulation of the unity underlying a story

Elementary Plot: the point of an anecdote or saying—the chain plot—plot of stock characters—the one-two-three form

Plot in fully developed literature

Plots of passion or situation

Complication and resolution: an abstract form with many concrete manifestations

Movement as plot in progression

Motive Form: simple—foreshortening—introversion—the regular arch

Motive Force: motive situation—motive personages—momentum of character and circumstance—intrigues, counter intrigues, and irony.—Supernatural motive forces: destiny, Providence; retribution, and its negation in accident

Plot

simple: unison

complex: harmony; resolving into elements each of which has full plot interest—a climax in Shakespeare's federations of plots

before all present break into laughter—all except one, who declares he cannot see the 'point' of the joke. It does not follow that this dissentient is lacking in sense of humor; it may well be that some idiom used, or some local custom assumed, familiar to the rest, is unknown to him. Thus the magnetic circle was for him incomplete, and the flash of humor did not follow. In the same way, something analogous to plot makes the epigram or saying: the 'brevity' which is the soul of wit is a variant of plot interest.

An element of art so fundamental as plot may be expected to emerge in folk-lore and primitive poetry. In an earlier chapter[1] we have seen that the first recognizable form of poetry is folk-poetry: here the public—all who are present—constitute alike authors, performers, and audience. It is a game of poetry: the whole conception of a 'game' is a variant of the conception of 'plot'; one game differs from another game by having a different plot to its sport. We have seen how a leading form of such poetic game was the augmenting or diminishing chain: a survival of the former is "The House That Jack Built"; of the latter, "Ten Little Niggers." The chain plot is constituted by successive links, each leading to the next, and the whole may be prolonged indefinitely. "The House That Jack Built" might go on forever. This chain plot in a higher stage of literature is illustrated in a charming Japanese *comedietta* translated by Mr. B. H. Chamberlain under the title *Ribs and Skin*.[2] The complimentary verbosity so characteristic of Japanese literature makes it too long for quotation, and its vivacity suffers in the following condensation.

The scene is a Buddhist Temple: the personages, the Rector, his Curate, and Parishioners who successively arrive. The Rector announces his intention to retire in favor of the Curate, and bids the Curate receive callers while he himself rests.—A Parishioner

[1] Chapter i, pages 36 ff.

[2] *Classical Poetry of the Japanese* (Trübner).

arrives, and (after the usual interchange of compliments) requests the loan of the Temple umbrella, which the Curate at once grants. When he reports this to the Rector, the Rector approves, except that he should not have lent a new umbrella, never used: he might have invented a plausible excuse. "The request with which you honor me is a slight one. But a day or two ago my master went out with it, and meeting with a gust of wind at a place where four roads met, the ribs flew off on one side, and the skin on another. So we have tied both skin and ribs by the middle, and hung them up to the ceiling. This being so it would hardly be able to answer your purpose."—The Curate will bear this injunction in mind.—Soon a second Parishioner arrives, and (with the usual preliminaries) makes bold to ask a loan of the Temple horse.—"Nothing could be slighter than the request with which you honor me. But a day or two ago my master went out with it, and meeting with a gust of wind at a place where four roads met, the ribs flew off on one side and the skin on another. So we have tied both skin and ribs by the middle and hung them up to the ceiling. This being so it would hardly be able to answer your purpose." When the Curate reports this, the Rector storms at his stupidity.—But what ought the Curate to have said?—Some fitting excuse: "We lately turned him out to grass; and, becoming frolicsome, he dislocated his thigh, and is lying down covered with straw in a corner of the stable. This being so, he will hardly be able to answer your purpose."—The Curate will keep these injunctions in mind, but grumbles to himself at being blamed for doing exactly as he has been told to do.—A third Parishioner enters, and (with profuse compliments) invites the Rector and the Curate to a feast at his house.—The Curate accepts for himself, but his master will not be able to attend.—Has the Rector, then, some other business?—Not exactly; but "we lately turned him out to grass, and, becoming frolicsome, he dislocated his thigh and is lying down covered with straw in a corner of the stable."

Obviously, this succession of blunderings can go on, link by link, indefinitely; though practical necessities will find some conclusion to a chain plot—in this case, the conclusion of a quarrel and a fight.

The chain formation enters into fully developed literature, and seems the basis of well-marked types of plot. Such are the picaresque novel, the story of adventure, the epic or dramatic caricature. Types like these rest upon linking together successive incidents of the proper kind: pieces of mischief, startling adventures, exaggerated personal characteristics. We must not expect, where strong human interest has come in, the definiteness of chain formation found in the plot that is only a poetic game. But the principle is the same. Compare a chain plot like the story of the Hunchback[1] in the *Arabian Nights* with such a normal type as that of the *Odyssey*. In both we have a series of adventures: in the *Odyssey* the adventures are simply successive, in the other case they are cumulative. We might almost refer the plot of an allegory to the same class. Given the symbolism of an escape from a City of Destruction as typifying an attempt to shake off a life of sin: all the rest of the *Pilgrim's Progress* links with this initial idea.

From primitive, or at least from very early, literature comes a second basic type of plot. This is the puppet-play, or better, the play of stock characters. Some three or four character types are fixed by custom—say, the bumptious man, and the man who is always put upon, the heavy father, or the gay Lothario. In any particular performance those who assume these parts *extemporize* dialogue, and so action, in conformity with their parts. There is still the idea of poetry as a game. In fully developed literature this type appears as the plot of character relations. At the outset—perhaps in the title—interesting contrasts suggest themselves, and as the movement of the plot proceeds are developed. *Sense and Sensibility*, *Pride and Prejudice*, are titles founded on this conception of plot. Of course, in the complexity of modern story any such type will probably be blended with other interests of story.

[1] This is discussed in *World Literature*, pages 307–10. Compare above, pages 147–48.

Miss Austen, with the ease of a great master, links the main plot, suggested by the title *Pride and Prejudice*, with two other love stories that throw it up by contrast, the one idyllic, the other founded on frivolity of character.

In the field of primitive story which is well represented by the collections of Grimm there is a type of plot often appearing which is of great theoretic interest. It may be called the one-two-three form. The numerical basis is not limited to the number three: but in each case there is a series of incidents such that the rest serve only to make the final incident a climax. A simple example will be found in such a story as this.[1]

A father, nearing the end of his life, realises that he has no property to leave to his three children except the family house, which of course cannot be divided. Accordingly he sends his sons out into the world for a year, in order that they may learn each a trade: the one who at the end of the year is found most expert in his trade shall have the house. One becomes a barber; another, a farrier; the third, a swordsman. When at the end of the year they are put to the test, the barber is so expert that he can shave a racer as he runs by without stopping him. The farrier shoes the four horses of a chariot while the chariot keeps moving. At this moment a shower comes on: the swordsman whips out his sword and waves it over his father's head with such rapidity that it serves all the purposes of an umbrella. The swordsman is awarded the family house.

It is obvious that the feats of the barber and the farrier are introduced only to throw into relief the supreme dexterity of the swordsman. But this one-two-three form is capable of very high elaboration: as is illustrated in the beautiful story of the Giant with the Three Golden Hairs.[2]

A baby is born with a caul, which the gossips interpret to mean that he is doomed to become a king before he dies. The king of the country hearing this is jealous; he takes possession of the baby upon a pretext of bringing him up as a great lord, but contrives to have him

[1] Condensed from *Grimm's Fairy Tales* (Routledge). [2] *Ibid.*

dropped in a basket into a stream. The basket is stopped by a mill-dam, and the child is reared as the miller's son. Twelve years after the king by chance comes to the mill, is struck by the appearance of the youth, and hears the strange history. He recognizes the failure of his attempt; but takes the lad into his service, and sends him with a letter to the royal palace, the drift of which is that the bearer of the letter is instantly to be put to death. On his way to the palace the youth falls in, unknowingly, with a company of robbers, who notice the letter as they are about to kill him, and, taking pity, alter the letter secretly, and make it a command that the youth shall immediately be married to the king's daughter. This has just been done, when the king returns. He recognises that the marriage is irrevocable; but persisting in his attempts on the life of the youth, makes out that the king's son-in-law is bound to undertake the dangerous mission of securing three golden hairs from the head of a certain Giant. The youth without hesitation sets out on the expedition. His journey leads him through a certain town: the guard, before admitting him, require that he should explain the great mystery of this town—why a certain tree that hitherto had borne golden apples has lately ceased to bear fruit of any kind. The lad promises that on his return journey he will tell them the reason. He comes to a second town and it is demanded that he explain why a fountain in that town, which used to run with wine, will not now even run with water. He promises to explain on his return. A river separates him from the land of the Giant, but there is a ferry: the ferryman insists on knowing why he alone is doomed thus to be forever ferrying passengers to and fro. This also the youth will explain on his return. He now reaches the Giant's home, and makes friends with the Giant's grandmother; who hides him when the Giant returns at night and goes to sleep with his head on his grandmother's lap. The grandmother plucks a golden hair from the Giant's head: he awakes in a rage, but the grandmother pacifies him by telling of a dream that had disturbed her—how a fountain which had run with wine suddenly ceased even to run with water. The Giant says that there was a toad in the channel: let them take it out, and the fountain would run with wine as before. He returns to sleep and snoring, and the grandmother pulls out a second golden hair, and a second time pacifies the

Giant's irritation by telling her dream—of a tree which instead of bearing golden fruit bore no fruit at all. The Giant impatiently remarked that there was a mouse gnawing at the root of the tree. When the third golden hair is pulled, the Giant becomes furious. But the grandmother pleads that no one can help his dreams—this time the dream of a ferryman condemned to be forever ferrying passengers across the same river. The Giant answers, that the ferryman has only to put the oar into the hand of the next passenger, and the passenger will be doomed to take his place. The Giant is now left to sleep peacefully, and the youth with his prize returns. Ferried across the river, he tells the ferryman what to do with the next passenger. Reaching the first city, the youth explains about the toad: this is found to be true, and the citizens in gratitude give the youth two mules laden with gold. He comes to the other city, explains the mystery, and receives two more mules laden with gold. At last he arrives at his father-in-law's castle, with the three golden hairs, and also the four mules laden with gold. To the amazed inquiries of the king, the youth answers with descriptions of the gold of the Giant's land, and of the ferryman who is ready to ferry passengers to it. The wicked king sets out instantly, and is ferried across. Then the ferryman puts his oar into the hand of the king. And the king is ferrying passengers across the river to this very day.

This is a masterpiece of the design which is the basis of plot: a one-two-three form, which is a series of adventures, just before completion develops a second one-two-three form, which is a series of wonders: the last detail of the last wonder strikes through the whole the unity of poetic justice.

I have elsewhere discussed at some length the *Kalevala*,[1] that single example of primitive poetry which has attained the highest degree of artistic excellence. Nothing is more noticeable about the Finnish masterpiece than the degree to which the one-two-three form pervades its whole construction. The movement of the poem—so far as it has a unity of movement—is an extended example of the one-two-three form. The numeri-

[1] *World Literature*, pages 333–50.

cal series, simple or highly involved, is the basis of every lyric effect, and every epic incident. So accepted a convention has it become, that, in the *Kalevala*, it would appear that no one is permitted to tell the truth except as a climax to a series of lies.

II

It has been worth while to dwell at some length on the subject of plot as it appears in early literature, because we may generalize on this point, and say that, in primitive story, just in proportion as the material is void of significance, in the same proportion the artistic appeal is to pure interest of plot design. When we come to poetry in its full development, it is obviously impossible, within the limits of a single chapter, even to hint at the variety of forms that may be assumed by plot. In the previous chapters of this work, and in other works of mine, I have devoted a considerable space to the discussion of plot structure. All I can attempt here is to indicate—and that only in outline—the broader features of plot, and to refer readers who may desire further assistance to what I have said elsewhere. The chapter must, I fear, be a catalogue of what there is to discuss rather than a discussion.

In the historic line of our world literature (we have seen) Classical epic and tragedy have had the prerogative voice in fixing our literary conceptions. This applies notably to conceptions of plot and movement. Classical drama laid the foundations for simple plot,[1] the Homeric poems for plot in its complexity.[2] Greek drama, and the Roman drama which carried on its traditions, were from first to last limited to the drama of situation. Within this field we see firmly established the main distinction between plots of passion and plots of action:[3] a

[1] Above, chapter viii, especially pages 162–63.

[2] Above, chapter vii, page 143.

[3] For this and what follows, a more extended discussion will be found in *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 130–41.

distinction which to a large extent, though not altogether, falls in with the distinction between tragedy and comedy. In the plots which turn upon the emphasis of situations, I have elsewhere distinguished four varieties of Greek tragedies. We have an opening situation developed to a climax, as in the *Agamemnon;* or the development of a final situation, as in *Œdipus the King*. There is, again, development from one situation to another: as when (in the *Choephori*) we begin with Electra in her woe, and pass to a climax of watching her deliverer, Orestes, plunged back into the woe of madness. Or, we have an opening situation developed to its reversal: the *Electra* of Sophocles begins with Electra in her misery, to end with her unmitigated triumph. I would not lay much stress on the distinction of these four types: yet their mere enumeration illustrates the emphasis which Greek tragedy lays upon the dramatic situation. In a previous chapter[1] of this work I have indicated the phase of mediaeval literary history which modified the conception of tragedy, and made it, for Shakespeare, the development of a situation emphasizing fallen greatness.

Contrast with all this the Greek plots of action, of which the *Ion*[2] is a splendid example. By the movement of this drama, a mother is drawn on to attempt the life of her son, whose loss in infancy has been her life trouble; the enthusiastic votary of Apollo is plunged in skepticism as to the character of the god he adores; the son is unconsciously haling his own mother to execution: when a chance encounter with the Priestess reveals son and mother to one another, while Apollo emerges as the Providence that, by the smallest of accidents, has brought moral harmony out of chaos. Here we see developed that particular type of design which perhaps more than any other was destined to permeate creative literature. It is simply described as complication and resolution: a course of events is seen to enter

[1] Chapter viii, pages 177–78.

[2] *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 134–36, 98.

into some entanglement, which entanglement however exists only that it may be resolved. Stated in these terms, it seems to be a plot form of abstract design. But such complication and resolution will often clothe themselves in concrete types of human interest. They will appear as a crime and its retribution; as Hybris—the intoxication of self-sufficiency—and the resulting Nemesis; as exaltation and fall. We may have a problem with its solution; an oracle and its fulfilment, or in some other way mystery passing into clearness. In a lighter strain, we may have folly—like the folly of Parolles—and its exposure; peril and release; haunting (in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*) and disenchantment; artificial conventions (like those of *Love's Labour's Lost*)[1] and reaction. The complication may take the form of an intrigue, with alternative resolutions of success or discomfiture. There is no limit to the concrete varieties that this abstract interest of complication and resolution may assume. In the field of Greek drama there is an interesting variant of this general type: we have the complication and its resolution completed, but this is not the end of the action—the resolution is recomplicated. In the admirable plot of the *Iphigenia in Taurica*,[2] the complication reaches the point of a sister all but offering her own brother on the altar of Artemis; the resolution is an intrigue of escape which is completely successful, until—as we learn from the Messenger's speech—at the outer bound of the harbor a sudden change of wind or current drives the fugitives back into their enemies' power: a divine intervention is required to conclude the action. Such plot of fortune turns may be carried farther still into the pendulum plot, with its backward and forward swing of alternations, as in the *Philoctetes*[3] of Sophocles, or the *Andromache* of Euripides.

[1] Fully discussed in *Shakespeare as Artist*, chapter xiv.

[2] Compare *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 98–99, 136–37.

[3] *Ibid.*, pages 137–41.

In the widely different literary field of the Biblical rhapsody[1] we sometimes have for interest of plot a similar pendulum swing between displays of judgment and salvation.

III

Interest of movement makes one side of the general interest of plot.[2] Dramatic or epic action takes motive form as we follow it from beginning to end of a poem. Suppose the scheme of plot to be complication and resolution: the normal order—indeed, the only possible order in actual events—is that the complication must precede the resolution which disentangles it. But every reader knows that this is not necessarily the order in which the elements of the action come before us in the poem. In the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*, we have seen[3] the beautiful movement that may be called the foreshortening of story: the poems open with stages of the resolution, and the previous complication is later on made known to us in the hero's story of his past adventures. The *Iliad* follows the normal order—a quarrel and its consequences: yet this is consistent with the effect of movement known as introversion.

A
B
C
CC
BB
AA

The last section balances the first—the tragic reconciliation of Achilles and Priam measures the woe that has sprung from con-

[1] A fine example is Isa., chapters 24–27: see *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 416–23, where the rhapsody is printed in full, with the pendulum changes indicated by changes of type.

[2] Compare chapter xx of *Shakespeare as Artist*.

[3] Chapter vii, pages 139–41, 145, is parallel with this section of the present chapter.

sequences of the opening quarrel. In the main part of the action that comes between, there is a reversal of order—all at first runs counter to Agamemnon and in favor of Achilles, then all is against Achilles until his submission.

This motive form of introversion seems only a step removed from the movement of the regular arch. This has, in a previous chapter, been described at length in application to the Prophecy of Joel. It has also been illustrated from the Shakespearean drama: how in *Macbeth*, unbroken success in the first half of the movement is balanced by unbroken failure in the descending half; the central point of the play is a mingling of success and failure, where Banquo is slain but Fleance escapes. Or the arch is reversed:

the first half of fall is balanced by the second half of recovery. On page 192 has been indicated the movement of *Winter's Tale*—one of Shakespeare's consummately beautiful plots. Here the fall manifests itself in a sixfold action, answered by the corresponding sixfold action of the rise; while the central point of the movement is an oracle, in which the varied strains of the fall stand fully revealed, and the strains of the recovery are dimly shadowed.

IV

Interest of movement extends beyond such motive form to another kind of interest which may be designated as motive force.[1] When we fasten our attention upon a succession of incidents conceived as a movement of events, we are naturally led to inquire what brings about this movement of events, what are the literary *motives* of the plot. It is in relation to such

[1] Chapter xx of *Shakespeare as Artist* from page 380 deals with this general subject. In *Ancient Classical Drama* see Index under word "Motives."

motive forces realized in the course of a story that the general conception of plot passes beyond abstract design, and approaches the conception we call law or Providence in the world of reality.

An earlier chapter has discussed at full length the beautiful plot in Scott's *Monastery*.[1] Here it appeared that large part of the movement of the story was latent in the opening situation. The beginning of the Reformation is making itself felt in the territory of a monastery, a monastery on the borderland between England and Scotland; at once there arise a series of contrasts between English and Scotch, Protestant and Catholic, older and newer ways of thinking and phases of life—in which contrasts great part of the interest of the story is found. But the opening situation does not constitute the whole motive force of the plot: there are in addition two special sources of movement. The euphuist—an exaggerated emanation from the age that is to be—serves as further complicating force, aggravating the confusion of events already existing. And there is a supernatural personage—one in strict harmony with the spirit of the age that is passing away—who consciously seeks to retard the drift of events, yet can only succeed in modifying, not in altering, the course of the movement.

Besides the motive force of a situation, we naturally find motive personages. Richard the Third is the chief motive force of the play called after his name: of the multiplied retributions we see enacting themselves in this drama there is not one which does not receive some momentum from the conscious action of Richard.[2] In *Othello*,[3] Iago is a motive personage: the four separate intrigues which he initiates, acting upon the three love stories going on from the commencement of the play, bring about an ever-increasing tangle of tragic complication, until

[1] Chapter xiii from page 273 on.

[2] The play is discussed at length in *Shakespeare as Artist*, chapters iv, v.

[3] Discussed at length in chapter xi of *Shakespeare as Artist;* compare also page 409 of that work.

the whole culminates in a tragic reaction upon Iago himself. And so, in general terms, we may recognize as motive forces the momentum of character, and the sway of circumstance. In stories of a lighter tone, personality will often manifest itself in the form of intrigues; intrigues naturally call into play counter intrigues; in all these motive forces are found.

It is obvious, again, that the supernatural—in varied forms—is a great motive force in story.[1] I have elsewhere[2] described the ancient Classical tragedy as the worship of destiny. Sometimes it is as an external force that destiny is seen to control events: the irony of fate mocks all attempts to resist it. As we approach more modern thought, destiny changes into Providence, the force outside ourselves coming to be conceived as design. Providence as a dramatic motive reaches perhaps its climax in *The Tempest* of Shakespeare.[3] In this story enchantment is postulated as an irresistible force, and by possession of this Prospero is made a personal Providence for the enchanted island, in which nothing can happen but by his permission or contrivance.

Of course, retribution—as a purely moral idea, or in its more artistic conception of poetic justice—is a leading motive force in story.[4] But here we must be on our guard against what I have elsewhere designated as the great ethical fallacy.[5] No fallacy of literary analysis can be more dangerous than that which would seek to read Shakespeare's plays as an elaborate

[1] Compare *Shakespeare as Thinker*, chapter xiv.

[2] *Ancient Classical Drama*, page 108; and generally, pages 93–109.

[3] Fully discussed in chapter xiii of *Shakespeare as Artist:* compare also chapter xii.

[4] Compare chapter ii of *Shakespeare as Thinker;* chapters v and vi of *Shakespeare as Artist.* For poetic justice, compare *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 44 ff., 383.

[5] Compare above, chapter xviii, page 352; and *Shakespeare as Thinker*, page 7.

ethical system. No poet has been more clear than Shakespeare in his insistence upon accident—the incalculable—as a large force in human life. In the play of *Romeo and Juliet*[1]—precisely as in the sacred drama of Job—it is made clear that the culminating waves of calamity come upon the central personages, not through errors on their part, but as the result of circumstances beyond their control; the play is a presentation, not of retribution, but of the pathos of life. The interminable discussions we hear as to the play of *Hamlet* seem to me largely due to the fact that interpreters confine their attention to the personality of Hamlet himself, and ignore the large extent to which the issues of events in this play are determined by accidents. On page 397 (Chart XXIII) I cite from another work of mine[2] a plot scheme of the play. This brings out how, in the six separate actions of which (apart from the interest of Hamlet himself) the bulk of the story is made up, not a single one reaches its dénouement without the intervention of accident. Hamlet himself, of course, is a large motive force to the action of the play: but here again the designs of Hamlet need the interposition of accident to determine their event. And this, which analysis makes so clear, is emphasized in the language of the play itself. When at the close Horatio undertakes to interpret the course of events, it is accident which makes a distinctive note of his exposition.

> And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
> How these things came about: so shall you hear
> Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
> *Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,*
> Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
> And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
> Fall'n on the inventors' heads.

[1] For accident and the play of *Romeo and Juliet*, compare chapter iii of *Shakespeare as Thinker* (see also Index under "Accident"); *Ancient Classical Drama*, page 136.

[2] *Shakespeare as Thinker*, page 364; pages 318–22 discuss the play.

CHART XXIII

Plot Scheme of Hamlet

Main Plot

System of Six Actions
Graded wrong with Nemesis and Pathos

1. The King: greater crime and (accident assisting) full nemesis
2. The Queen: lesser crime and (accident assisting) pathetic nemesis
3. Polonius: politic intermeddling and (accident assisting) pathetic nemesis
4. Guildenstern and Rosencrantz: lesser nature intermeddling and (accident assisting) nemesis
5. Ophelia: love yielding to circumstances and (accident assisting) pathetic nemesis
6. Laertes: duty yielding to circumstances and (accident assisting) nemesis

Motive Character Action: Hamlet (resting on outer and inner life): by hesitation enlarging the wrong—by sudden determination (accident assisting) consummating the nemesis and pathos

Motive Circumstances
- initiating the movement: the Ghost
- assisting the consummation: the Pirates

Stationary Character Action: Horatio: illuminating the plot

Enveloping Action: wars of Norway and Denmark

Underplot of Relief

Successive phases of passion

- Supernatural awe: Ghost incidents
- Hysteric mockery of Hamlet
- Histrionic passion of the players
- Pathetic madness of Ophelia
- Weird humor: the Gravediggers

The general practice of Shakespeare falls in with the formal speech he puts into Horatio's mouth, in placing accident side by side with retribution among the motive forces of his dramatic world.

V

Structural interest reaches its highest point in complex plot: a work of art analyzes into component parts each of which has its own interest of design. So much has been said on this subject in earlier chapters[1] of this work, which have treated the evolution of epic and dramatic poetry, that there seems little need at this point for repetition.

The earliest conspicuous type of epic poetry in our world literature was found in the Homeric poems: these constitute, technically, the organic epic—the amalgamation of many stories in a common plot, a number of traditional legends drawn into harmony by a single architectonic mind. Within the limits of the Homeric poems the development of this organic epic appeared gradual. The *Iliad*[2] shows a single main story, working within the enveloping action of the Trojan War, with addition of secondary stories which are excrescences. In the *Odyssey*,[3] the elaborate main story has a scarcely less elaborate underplot, while the secondary stories are satellite stories centering round personages of the main action: the control of plot over matter is complete. We have seen how this tradition of the organic epic remains, almost to our own time, the main interest of epic poetry;[4] though side by side with it we have another interest of briefer plots reaching a climax in the modern short story.[5] Attention has been given to the various modes in which the constituent parts of organic epic are brought into

[1] Chapters vii and viii. Compare also *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 359-69.

[2] Above, pages 135–38.

[3] Above, pages 138–43.

[4] Above, pages 143 ff.

[5] Above, pages 152–53.

harmony:[1] the agglutination of stories with common heroes, or common interests like that of metamorphosis; the merging of stories in a common enveloping action; regular co-ordination of main plot and underplot; episodes growing into independent interests; the beautiful effect of involution, with its multiplication of stories inclosed within stories.

In the field of Greek drama, connection with the stage and Chorus were unfavorable to complexity of plot.[2] In Roman comedy[3]—in spite of the confinement to a single situation—we find multiple action in the way that various intrigues enter into the same complex situation, and reach a common disentanglement.

When the literary atmosphere of the Middle Ages has emphasized pure story interest, as against dramatic concentration, we reach the Romantic drama:[4] in this dramatization of many combined romances complexity of plot has full course. Shakespeare's plots are federations of plots, any one of which would have sufficed for the single plot interest of antiquity. The exquisite art with which this great master draws different stories into a common design has been illustrated by such examples as *The Merchant of Venice*[5] or *Winter's Tale*.[6] Complexity, with Shakespeare, seems an instinct. If he takes up the Roman story of the *Menaechmi*,[7] with its confusions between a pair

[1] Above, pages 143–52.

[2] In Euripides the germ of underplot, and agglutinative combination of stories, appear. See *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 187–90.

[3] See above, chapter viii, pages 174–75; and *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 412 ff.

[4] Above, chapter viii, pages 176, 184 ff.

[5] Above, page 188. Fuller discussion of this play in chapters i–iii of *Shakespeare as Artist*.

[6] Above, pages 191–93.

[7] Compare plot scheme for *Comedy of Errors* in *Shakespeare as Thinker*, page 339.

of twins, he at once duplicates the action into a confusion between two pairs of twins, and at the same time interweaves this with a serious story. He cannot work out a moral problem—itself a complex problem—in the royal family of Lear, without duplicating it with a similar, and yet a contrasting problem, in the family of Lear's lord chamberlain.[1] The plot is most complex in what appear to the reader to be Shakespeare's lightest plays. On page 401 (Chart XXIV) I give the plot scheme of *Twelfth Night* to illustrate this point.[2] Complication with resolution is an effect applying to the simplest story: in *Twelfth Night* we have a considerable number of such stories, each complicated and resolved. But these different stories or actions fall into well-marked groups: complication and resolution applied within a group becomes clash and disentanglement of the related stories. But the plot thickens: there is found to be interference between one group of actions and another group —a higher clash and disentanglement. Then all is suddenly made straight, with as much ease as in the manipulation of a 'cat's cradle.' This image seems appropriate to plot: since anthropology shows that the two hundred (or more) different varieties of 'cat's cradle' constitute, for certain stages of human evolution, the main interest of artistic design.

The purpose of this chapter, I repeat, has not been complete analysis of literary plots—which would require a volume—but only sufficient analysis to illustrate the theory of plot as poetic architecture and artistic Providence. These two aspects of plot must always be taken together, reflecting the essential elements of art in design and human interest. Objection has sometimes been made to such analysis—and especially to its plot schemes—on the ground that it reduces the literary interest of the plot to mere mechanism. But this seems a perverse

[1] Fully discussed in chapter x of *Shakespeare as Artist.*

[2] More fully discussed in *Shakespeare as Thinker*, pages 170–74.

CHART XXIV

Plot Scheme of Twelfth Night

Plot—

From the motive circumstance of the Shipwreck, by the complicating personage Viola (disguised as a page):

Main Plot: Situation of error (i.e., mistaken identity) developing into a clash or triangular duel of fancy

Viola in love with the Duke

Duke in love with Olivia

Olivia in love with the Page (Viola)

Underplot: A triplet of folly, graded

Belch and Maria: natural abandon

Aguecheek: imitation abandon

Malvolio: unnatural antagonism to abandon developing into a clash of the rest against Malvolio

Clash of the main and underplot in the course of development: intrigue to set Aguecheek against (disguised) Viola

From the motive circumstance of the Shipwreck, by the resolving personage Sebastian (twin to Viola):

Main Plot: disentangled as a double marriage

Viola and Duke
Olivia and Sebastian

Underplot: resolved with the resolution of the main plot

Relief—

Professional folly of the Clown brought successively into contact with all the personages of the plot

objection, that would confuse between the plot and the plot formula. It would be a parallel error to find fault with the prosody of a sonnet, that it degrades a lovely lyric to a mere *a b b a a c c a d e e d d e*. The matter of a sonnet might be expressed in prose; the content of a drama or story might occur in history. Artistic enhancement comes in where the same material appeals also to our sense of design, restraining itself within rhythmic beats and correspondences that can be formulated. Two cautions, however, must be observed in reference to the whole subject. The first is that, when criticism traces design in creative literature, the reference is never to conscious design on the part of the poet, but only to design that seems inherent in the poetic product. The second principle is that analysis in application to art is always a means to an end, never an end in itself. So far as the suggestion of scheme and order is felt to enhance the poetic effect of the work as a whole, it is sound: when it goes beyond this, and becomes analysis for the sake of analysis, it falls to the ground by its own weight.

CHAPTER XXIV

POETIC ORNAMENT: THEORY OF IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM

In this chapter we take up certain varieties of literary art which are among the greatest sources of poetic beauty. They may loosely be comprehended in the general term 'imagery': but we shall see that some of these are really antithetic to imagery, though they perform a similar function; on the other hand certain things not usually termed imagery are by theoretic considerations brought into the same classification. What makes all these varieties of effect into a unity is comparison: that is to say, ideas entirely external to the matter in hand are imported into the sentence for the purpose of comparison with the matter in hand or some detail of it. The comparison may be effected in various ways; but we can always trace the originating idea, forming part of the structure of the poem, the accessory idea imported for comparison with this originating idea, and the interest of the comparison itself. In the general view of poetic art all these varieties sum up as ornament: as with ornament in architecture, poetic ornament is a source of beauty not essential to the structure of the poem, but accessory. The images are, of course, never inharmonious with the point of the poem at which they appear; they often enhance the general effect; and they are always an independent beauty in themselves.

I

First: we have simile and metaphor. These varieties of poetic effect have always been associated together: the simile has been called an extended metaphor, the metaphor a compressed simile. But the real difference between the two is a difference of great theoretic importance. In the simile, the comparison is indicated by a distinct particle—*like*, *as*. Simile

is thus formal imagery. In the metaphor we have veiled imagery: there are no particles to indicate comparison, but the connection of the two ideas is made indirectly, insinuated into the wording of the sentence. Take a notable passage from *Paradise Lost.* The Demons in Hell, about to enter the Council Hall, suddenly contract their vast bulk, so that myriads can find room in a single chamber.

> Behold a wonder! They but now who seem'd
> In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,
> Now less than smallest dwarfs, in narrow room
> Throng numberless, like that Pygmean race
> Beyond the Indian mount, or faery elves,
> Whose midnight revels, by a forest side
> Or fountain some belated peasant sees,
> Or dreams he sees, while over-head the moon
> Sits arbitress, and nearer to the earth
> Wheels her pale course; they on their mirth and dance
> Intent, with jocund music charm his ear;
> At once with joy and fear his heart rebounds.[1]

Here the originating idea is that of demons contracting their spirit forms: two accessory ideas—of pygmies and of fairies—are imported to make two similes. But the two similes are differently treated: the comparison to pygmies is barely stated; the comparison to fairy life is worked up into an elaborate picture—shadowy fairy existence, life of mirth and mischief and music, lonely and beautiful haunts, mystic relations with the moon, mixed awe and rapture of the surprised beholder. It is further clear that this comparison with fairy life might be conveyed in metaphorical form, and interwoven with the structure of the narration: the sentence might run—

> Fairy grace
> Replacing demon bulk, with roomy ease
> Peopled the Hall of Council.

[1] *Paradise Lost*, i, 777.

The whole illustration suggests three kinds of interest in the treatment of simile and metaphor. (1) In the simile, the imported idea being kept outside the original passage has the greater scope for working up into what makes a detailed picture in itself. (2) The metaphor, lacking this, has a compensating characteristic that, as veiled imagery, it can exhibit the most varied degrees in the veiling or revealing of the comparison. (3) In both simile and metaphor alike, there is the intrinsic interest in the comparison of the original and the accessory ideas.

We may first take up the interest of working out a simile in detail. Milton, following Homer and Virgil, is particularly powerful in this elaboration of similes; though the criticism of the later classical school ridiculed these as *comparaisons à longue queue*.[1] Two varieties of treatment may be distinguished. In the first, the particulars are used to elaborate the accessory idea, thus only indirectly assisting the purpose of the comparison. The muffled applause of the demonic assembly is compared to reverberations among hollow rocks.

> He scarce had finish'd, when such murmur fill'd
> Th' assembly, as when hollow rocks retain
> The sound of blust'ring winds, which all night long
> Had rous'd the sea, now with hoarse cadence lull
> Sea-faring men o'er-watch't, whose bark by chance
> Or pinnace anchors in a craggy bay
> After the tempest.[2]

Much less than this would have conveyed the comparison; but the whole makes a finished sea-picture. Of the same nature is another passage: the simile of the rustic maiden in the midst of rural scenes emphasizing the shock of surprise with which

[1] *Spectator*, No. 303.

[2] *Paradise Lost*, ii, 284.

Satan, invading the beauties of Eden, comes upon the yet more exquisite beauty of Eve.

> As one who long in populous city pent,
> Where houses thick and sewers annoy the air,
> Forth issuing on a summer's morn to breathe
> Among the pleasant villages and farms
> Adjoin'd, from each thing met conceives delight,
> The smell of grain, or tedded grass, or kine,
> Or dairy, each rural sight, each rural sound;
> If chance with nymph-like step fair virgin pass,
> What pleasing seem'd, for her now pleases more,
> She most, and in her look sums all delight.[1]

In the other treatment, the added particulars, besides making a picture in themselves, also emphasize the comparison. The style of St. Paul, it is often remarked, is one that freely admits digressions: yet such digressions that at the end of each the general argument seems to have been advancing. It is the same with this type of imagery. Satan had been described as lying prone on the sea of fire:

> in bulk as huge
> As . . . . that sea-beast
> Leviathan, which God of all his works
> Created hugest that swim the ocean stream;
> Him haply slumbring on the Norway foam,
> The pilot of some small night-founder'd skiff
> Deeming some island, oft, as seamen tell,
> With fixed anchor in his scaly rind
> Moors by his side under the lee, while night
> Invests the sea, and wished morn delays:
> So strecht out huge in length the Arch-Fiend lay
> Chain'd on the burning lake.[2]

It is a quaint picture of a whale mistaken by seamen for an island; but the whole of it assists the general idea of bulk.

[1] *Paradise Lost*, ix, 445. [2] *Ibid.*, i, 196.

Again: the night scene in Eden reaches a point where the angelic guard suddenly threaten Satan:

> Th' angelic squadron bright
> Turn'd fiery red, sharpning in mooned horns
> Their phalanx, and began to hem him round,
> With ported spears, as thick as when a field
> Of Ceres ripe for harvest waving bends
> Her bearded grove of ears, which way the wind
> Sways them; the careful ploughman doubting stands
> Lest on the threshing-floor his hopeful sheaves
> Prove chaff.[1]

The accessory idea is rural, yet its note of anxiety is in harmony with the panic moment of the scene in Eden. Similarly, when the Serpent-Tempter is leading Eve to the fatal tree—

> Hope elevates, and joy
> Bright'ns his crest, as when a wandring fire
> Compact of unctuous vapour, which the night
> Condenses, and the cold environs round,
> Kindl'd through agitation to a flame,
> (Which oft, they say, some evil spirit attends)
> Hovering and blazing with delusive light,
> Misleads th' amazed night-wanderer from his way
> To bogs and mires, and oft through pond or pool,
> There swallow'd up and lost, from succour far.[2]

We have an elaborate picture of the *ignis fatuus*, but every detail emphasizes the thought of leading astray. The spirit of this second treatment may be seen in the choice, as well as the elaboration of similes. It is noteworthy that no less than ten similes appear in different parts of Milton's poem all insisting on the vast *numbers* of the Fallen Angels: in all these the variety of similes employed is in exact harmony with the circumstances

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iv, 977.

[2] *Ibid.*, ix, 633.

of the Fallen Hosts at the moment.[1] While they are on the burning lake, they are numerous as leaves in Vallombrosa, as Red Sea sedge, as the Egyptians swallowed up in the returning waters; springing into the air, the angels are numerous as a plague of locusts; forming on the plain, as hordes of northern barbarians; crowding into the narrow council hall, as bees in spring; contracting their forms, they are numberless as pygmies, or faery elves. In heaven, before their sin, they are described to be innumerable "as stars of night, or stars of morning, dew-drops."

The essence of metaphor, as veiled imagery, is found in the exact degree of closeness or remoteness with which it allows the two ideas—the originating and the accessory idea—to be associated in the comparison it suggests. Take a particular case.

> On a sudden open fly,
> With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
> Th' infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
> Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
> Of Erebus.[2]

Here the originating idea—the statement actually made—is that the opening gates grate with a harsh sound; the idea imported for comparison is thunder. We may frame a scale of degrees of closeness with which these two ideas may be associated in the grammatical structure of a sentence.

a) The doors grate harsh like thunder. [A simile.]
b) Their harsh grating, a very thunder, resounds. [Juxtaposition—a metaphor which is all but a simile.]
c) Their grating, a harsh thunder, resounds. [Slightly closer connection: the attributes of the two ideas have become entangled.]

[1] Compare *Paradise Lost*, i, 303–12, 338, 351, 768, 780–81; v, 745.
[2] *Ibid.*, ii, 879.

d) The thunder of their harsh grating resounds. [The connection is now organic: the two ideas form a single grammatical phrase.]

e) The doors grate harsh thunder. [Closer organic connection: the imported idea becomes the completion of the old predicate.]

f) The doors thunder forth a harsh grating. [Last stage of closeness: the new idea has replaced the old predicate.]

In this series of forms taken by the same comparison we see the external or imported idea advancing until it has supplanted the root-word of the original expression. A invites B to his home as a guest; B marries A's daughter and enters the family; finally B acquires the family home and entertains his father-in-law as guest. Poetic discrimination is shown in seizing the exact degree of prominence with which two particular ideas will bear to be associated. We may compare "Stars of morning, dewdrops" with "The morning star that guides the starry flock": in the first, the original idea, dewdrops, and the accessory idea, stars of morning, can stand in simple juxtaposition, almost as in a simile; in the second case, the imported idea of a *shepherd* does not appear at all except as implied in the starry *flock*. Three metaphors of Milton have the same imported idea, that of *clothing:*

The moon o'er the dark her silver *mantle* threw.

Night *invests* the sea.

Caves o'er which the *mantling* vine lays forth her purple grape.

In the first, the accessory idea, *mantle*, is just substituted for *moonlight*. In the second, the idea of clothing is given more prominence by being made a verb and the action of the moon. In the third case, the sentence is complete without the accessory idea; this is only thrown in as an additional epithet to the vine.

The way to test analytically the entanglement of ideas in metaphors is to turn them into corresponding similes, in which

the accessory ideas will stand apart from the rest. As the advancing armies are about to meet in the shock of battle Satan interposes between them; the expression is—

> On the rough *edge* of battle ere it joined.[1]

Turn this into simile form, and we find a double comparison: an army is like a weapon, and its front rank like that weapon's edge. In the compression of the metaphor, the accessory idea of the second comparison (*edge*) is organically connected with the original idea of the first (*army*, which in Classical phraseology is called *battle*); again, the epithet *rough* (that is, bristling with weapons), which belongs to the first comparison, is associated with the accessory idea (*edge*) of the second. It is a powerful expression of Milton's where he speaks of the sword "with *steep*[2] force to smite descending." Here the originating idea is descending force, the imported idea is a fall from a precipice: the imported idea nowhere appears except so far as *steep* is an epithet for a precipice. One of the most intricate of metaphors is found in the description of the rainbow that attends the cessation of Noah's Flood:

> —a flow'ry verge to bind
> The fluid skirts of that same watery cloud,
> Lest it again dissolve and shower the earth.[3]

This resolves into a double simile: the rainbow is to the storm like a binding to a fraying skirt (note the exquisiteness of the word *fluid*), like a flowery border to a lawn: all the elements of the two comparisons are inextricably interwoven. Perhaps the strongest metaphor in all poetry is Hamlet's bitter word: "Frailty, thy name is woman!" The originating idea is woman and her frailty; the imported idea is a person and his name. It would have been a strong expression to have said, "Woman, thy name is frailty": here the imported idea of *name* would be joined organically to the subject of the original sentence. Ham-

[1] *Paradise Lost*, vi, 108. [2] *Ibid.*, vi, 324. [3] *Ibid.*, xi, 881.

let's metaphor is stronger still: the imported idea and the original subject have exchanged places.

Of course, it is only rarely that analysis is needed to determine closeness of associated ideas in metaphorical expressions: in ordinary cases we appreciate the effect instinctively, as we appreciate 'touch' on a musical instrument. This 'touch' would analyze in terms of infinitesimal fractions of a foot-pound of pressure, and of a second of duration. By practice we develop our sense of touch; by practice, occasionally assisted by analysis, we develop an instinct for metaphor.

Simile and metaphor, then, have each its characteristic treatment: both stand alike in regard to that which is the intrinsic interest of imagery—the pleasure derived from association between two disconnected sets of ideas. Here there seems little reason for analysis, unless it be as an excuse for lingering longer on these gems of poetic beauty.

We might particularize involuntary images: the basis of these seems to be the poet's vivid realization of a scene, the imported idea being so closely connected with the general conception as to be almost a part of it. The Council Hall in Hell "rose like an exhalation"; Satan in Chaos "springs upward like a pyramid of fire"; the trees at the creative fiat "rose as in a dance"; the rising all at once of the demon assembly was like "the sound of thunder heard remote"; Satan, crouching in form of a toad, at the touch of Ithuriel's spear dilates into his native form as if a spark had fallen upon a heap of nitrous powder.

Or, we have similes of attraction. These seem to depend upon the nature of the poet's mind, which is a storehouse of beautiful conceptions: conceptions of nature phenomena, or drawn from the previous poetry of the world which—alike to the poet and his reader—has become a second nature. Where an idea the poem is presenting approaches one of these things of beauty, its mere attractiveness seems to force a simile. A

large number of Milton's similes are founded on accepted topics of Biblical or Classical literature. And many others are drawn from ordinary phenomena of nature which so powerfully affect a sensitive imagination. The settled gloom which had hung over the Council of Fiends at last finds some relief when the project of the temptation of man is broached: it is irresistible to link this with the picture of a misty day that has found light at eventide.

> Thus they their doubful consultations dark
> Ended rejoicing in their matchless chief:
> As when from mountain-tops the dusky clouds
> Ascending, while the north wind sleeps, o'erspread
> Heav'n's cheerful face, the lowring element
> Scowls o'er the landscape dark'ned snow, or show'r;
> If chance the radiant sun with farewell sweet
> Extend his ev'ning beam, the fields revive,
> The birds their notes renew, and bleating herds
> Attest their joy, that hill and valley rings.[1]

When the horror of Satan and the horror of Death for the first time encounter one another, dark images of external nature seem to rush in of their own accord.

> Incenst with indignation Satan stood
> Unterrified; and like a comet burn'd
> That fires the length of Ophiuchus huge
> In th' Arctic sky, and from his horrid hair
> Shakes pestilence and war. . . . . Such a frown
> Each cast at th' other, as when two black clouds
> With Heav'n's artillery fraught, come rattling on
> Over the Caspian, then stand front to front
> Hov'ring a space, till winds the signal blow
> To join their dark encounter in mid air:
> So frown'd the mighty combatants, that Hell
> Grew darker at their frown.[2]

[1] *Paradise Lost*, ii, 486. [2] *Ibid.*, ii, 707.

Distinct from both these types are expository images, which serve a definite purpose in the narration. We have similes of scale: conveying the notion of size and degree in regard to objects of the imaginary world without the use of *definite* terms, which would have limited the imagination. Where Satan is beheld stretched out at full length, instead of saying (as Dante would have said) that he covered so many acres, Milton (we have seen) compares his bulk to the floating sea-monster. So Satan's shield is compared to the moon seen through a telescope; his spear exceeds the tallest Norwegian pine. Uriel hastening from the sun to warn the guardians of Eden comes flying *as swift as* a shooting star;[1] the ported spears of the angelic host hemming Satan round threaten *as thick as*[2] a wind-swept field of corn. Or, imagery may help over a detail of description which is really difficult for the imagination to grasp. The tradition on which the Hell of the *Paradise Lost* is founded represents it as a world of fire, but also as a world of darkness: the difficulty of mentally combining these opposite ideas is wonderfully assisted by a simile:

> On dry land
> He lights; if it were land that ever burn'd
> With solid, as the lake with liquid fire,
> And such appear'd in hue, as when the force
> Of subterranean wind transports a hill
> Torn from Pelorus, or the shatter'd side
> Of thund'ring Aetna whose combustible
> And fuell'd entrails thence conceiving fire,
> Sublimed with mineral fury, aid the winds,
> And leave a singed bottom, all involv'd
> With stench and smoke: such resting found the sole
> Of unblest feet.[3]

Occasionally, we note a curious closeness of resemblance between two sets of disconnected circumstances as that which

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iv, 556. [2] *Ibid.*, iv, 977. [3] *Ibid.*, i, 227.

has brought about the comparison. Satan, laboring through the shifting consistence of Chaos on his journey to the bright world of Eden, alights for a while on the outer shell of the world, still vexed by storms of Chaos yet affording comparatively solid foothold: a parallel can be found even for this.

> As when a vulture on Imaus bred,
> Whose snowy ridge the roving Tartar bounds,
> Dislodging from a region scarce of prey
> To gorge the flesh of lambs or yearling kids
> On hills where flocks are fed, flies toward the springs
> Of Ganges or Hydaspes, Indian streams;
> But in his way lights on the barren plains
> Of Sericana, where Chineses drive
> With sails and wind their cany wagons light:
> So on this windy sea of land, the Fiend
> Walk'd up and down.[1]

These are three among many types of imagery that might be distinguished. In the first type, the *raison d'être* of the comparison seems to be the vividness of the originating idea: in the second, the attractiveness of the imported idea; in the expository type, it lies in the connection between the two.

From metaphor in general we may distinguish metaphor direct. Where an association of ideas is, without formal particles of comparison, to be woven into the structure of a sentence, it is clear that this can be done in several different wordings: among others we may have some mode of expression that admits ambiguity—it may be read as a metaphor, it may also be read as a direct statement of fact. To take a very simple example. We have a clear simile in the verse—

> As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,
> So panteth my soul after Thee, O God.

[1] *Paradise Lost*, iii, 431.

The association of a panting beast with an aspiring soul may be conveyed metaphorically in various wordings of the sentence.

> My hunted soul panteth after the water-brooks of Zion.
>
> God, my glory in victory, my water of refreshment in the chase.
>
> A hunted beast pants for the brooks of Zion.

This last wording differs from the others: the wording is adequate to convey the metaphor to a reader who catches it; it might also be read as a mere statement of a beast panting for particular streams, without any suggestion of the soul. This is metaphor direct: a metaphor capable of being misread as a direct statement. All three forms of imagery come together in a well-known passage of *Lycidas*.

> Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise
> (That last infirmity of noble mind)
> To scorn delights, and live laborious days;
> But the fair guerdon when we hope to find,
> And think to burst out into sudden blaze,
> Comes the blind Fury with th' abhorred shears,
> And slits the thin-spun life. 'But not the praise,'
> Phoebus replied, and touch'd my trembling ears.

The comparison of fame to a spur is made by juxtaposition, the form of metaphor which is all but simile. The comparison of death to the Fury with her shears is highly metaphorical: the originating idea *death* is not named. Metaphor direct is found in the concluding line. This may be read as a direct statement: that the god of poetry touched the poet and reminded him of what he had forgotten. But the word *trembling* suggests the metaphor of a horse: the kindly driver playfully flicks the horse's ear that responds with the well-known quiver.

It would not seem worth while to make metaphor direct a separate form of imagery, were it not for the grave importance

of this in one branch of literature. Such direct metaphor is specially characteristic of the literature of the Bible, and is constantly overlooked; in my opinion more mistakes of biblical interpretation arise from this than from any other single source. I have elsewhere dealt with this subject at length: I may be permitted to quote one or two illustrations.[1]

A critical sentence in Ps. 78 is the following:

> *The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows,*
> *Turned back in the day of battle,*
> *They kept not the covenant of God,* etc.

It has been customary to see in this an allusion to a specific historical incident, though no satisfactory incident of history has been adduced. Here, again, the whole can be read as a piece of imagery: *Like warriors who, in armor and with weapons in hand, turn their backs in the midst of the battle, so the children of Ephraim were treacherous to the covenant of God.* No particular incident is described, but the whole defection of northern Israel from the covenant is compared to soldiers deserting on the field of battle. And this makes a suitable starting-point for the psalm, which is a national hymn of Judah, portraying alternately God's strength displayed over his people, and their frailty resisting his purposes, until a final outburst of divine power rejects northern Israel and proclaims the house of David as the chosen people. It may be added that a not dissimilar image (but this time in simile form) occurs in verse 57:

> *But turned back, and dealt treacherously like their fathers,*
> *They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.*

Another important case arises in Ps. 84:

> *Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house,*
> *And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,*
> *Even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my king and my God.*

Read as direct statement, this has been understood by some commentators to refer the psalm to the period of the exile when the temple is in ruins, the haunt of birds; others see an indication that the poet

[1] What follows is from the Note on Metaphor Direct in the *Modern Reader's Bible*, pages 1534–35.

must have been a dweller in the temple precincts, accustomed to watch the birds flitting round the sacred edifice. A better interpretation is surely found by understanding an image: *Like the birds finding in spring their nesting places, so the sacred seasons of the pilgrimages bring me to the altar of God.* Nothing else in the psalm suggests the period of the exile, the whole being filled with the idea of the pilgrimages to Jerusalem at the sacred feasts: the passage here discussed adds the exquisite image which compares the joyous approach of the sacred festivals with a stirring instinct of birds in the nesting season.

We may understand, then, a scale of varying degrees of closeness with which ideas are associated by imagery: one term of the scale is the simile, the other is this metaphor direct.

I pass on to certain varieties of imagery sufficiently distinct to be called by special names. Of these, the most obvious is personification. No element of poetic effect is so widespread in usage as this. In Classical literature, and in mediaeval allegory, it would seem that to use an initial capital for a word was all that was necessary to produce the effect of personification. In the philosophical books of Scripture, the idea of personified Wisdom is so fundamental that in one of them, the Wisdom of Solomon, this is most frequently indicated only by the pronoun *She*. All kinds of personification analyze as a particular type of metaphor, such that the accessory idea is always human personality. The underlying thought is a mental scale of which the ascending terms are abstract, concrete, personal: when attributes belonging properly to personality are metaphorically assigned to things concrete or abstract, the 'things' are, as it were, lifted in the scale, and endowed in greater or less degree with the privileges of consciousness. There are varieties of personification, which differ—as might be expected from what is a variant of the metaphor—according to the degree in which the personality is allowed to appear.

First, we have personification proper: here personal attributes are metaphorically assigned to things, and the personality is both distinct and sustained—sustained through a whole poem, or it may be a whole region of poetry. Such full personification makes the staple of mythology: illustration seems superfluous. There is, however, one remarkable example of personification proper: the conception of Sin and Death, which is so deeply embodied in the poetry of the *Paradise Lost.* It is interwoven with the whole structure of the poem; but appears most prominently in three episodes: an episode of the Second Book, where Satan encounters Sin and Death at the gate of Hell; an episode of the Tenth Book, in which Sin and Death build the bridge from Earth to Hell—the "broad way that leadeth to destruction"; and another episode of the same book where Sin and Death lay waste all creation after the fall of man has taken place.[1] The foundation for the whole is a single verse of Scripture,[2] the wording of which is faintly metaphorical: "The lust, when it has conceived, beareth sin; and the sin, when it is fullgrown, bringeth forth death." The incestuous genealogy thus suggested is by Milton drawn out in full details, details designedly made repellent with the proper loathsomeness of evil. The climax is the prayer[3] addressed by Sin to Satan: this is exquisitely worded so as to translate the deepest instincts of our spiritual nature into their evil counterparts, the depths of impiety posing as the height of devotion. The whole treatment of Sin and Death raises the most difficult of all the problems of interpretation belonging to the *Paradise Lost:* the question whether in all this we are to read imagery or not—whether the personality attached to the abstract ideas of Sin and Death is not to be understood as a real personality, Sin and

[1] *Paradise Lost,* ii, 681–726; x, 229–414; x, 585–613.

[2] James 1:15.

[3] *Paradise Lost,* x, 354–82.

Death being in the same category with the Satan, the Good and Evil Angels, the Hell and Paradise, of the poem; whether the underlying theology does not point to Satan as an anti-God, with a dark hint at the linked figures of Satan, Sin, and Death as a Trinity of Evil.

Other varieties of personification may be summed up in the general term 'semi-personification.' Personal attributes are assigned to things: the personality may be distinct enough, but not sustained beyond a single phrase; or it may be sustained in snatches over a long passage, yet not with the distinctness of full personality. Or, the personality may be neither distinct nor sustained: we are conscious only of a strong expression, which on analysis appears as the assignment of some measure of personality to what is non-personal. Illustrations of this last may be seen in such expressions of Milton as these: lifted a *noble* stroke; gunpowder dilated and *infuriate;* war *tormented* all the air; Hell's artillery *embowell'd* with outrageous noise the air; pain *implacable;* the ridges of *grim* war; deformed rout *entered* and foul disorder; war *wearied* hath performed what war can do. There is a higher degree of distinctness in the semi-personification which describes an awful moment of waiting for the descent of the angelic swords in the words,[1] "Expectation stood in horror"; or again, where the exquisite picture of on-coming evening—

> Now came still evening on, and twilight gray
> Had in her sober livery all things clad;
> Silence accompanied, for beast and bird,
> They to their grassy couch, these to their nests
> Were slunk, all but the wakeful nightingale;
> She all night long her amorous descant sung;

reaches a climax in the clause—

> Silence was pleased.[2]

[1] *Paradise Lost*, vi, 306. [2] *Ibid.*, iv, 598.

Semi-personification is often applied to a combination of things:

> Morn,
> Waked by the circling Hours, with rosy hand
> Unbarred the gates of light.[1]

Or, it expresses a relation between things: Discord, daughter of Sin; Sin, and his shadow Death, and Misery, Death's harbinger. It is a *tour de force* of epic description which has suggested the beauty of Eden as sum of the beauties of all other beautiful regions: the climax is in the lines[2]—

> Universal Pan
> Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance
> Led on th' eternal Spring.

The unanalyzable sense of beauty in Nature as a whole voices itself in the Greek word Pan; the Graces are beauties of Nature in detail, the Hours are beauties of Nature taken in succession: all are here linked together in a single stroke of personification.

One type of such semi-personification is peculiarly interesting, and of wide usage: where the vividness, copiousness, or luxuriance of natural phenomena—or, it may be, the opposite of all this—is brought out by suggesting for them a human motive. In the description of Eden we read of *compliant* boughs; of *pampered* boughs; how the trees *wept* gums, the gales *whispered* whence they stole their balmy spoils; the garden *derides* with *wanton* growth the efforts of Adam and Eve, who direct the *clasping* ivy where to climb. So the immediateness of response to creative fiat appears in the waters *hastening* with *glad* precipitance, in the sun *jocund* to run his longitude; especially, the effect is seen in the picture of the subsiding waters of the Flood:[3]

[1] *Paradise Lost*, vi, 2. [2] *Ibid.*, iv, 266. [3] *Ibid.*, xi, 841–49.

The clouds were fled,
Driven by a keen north-wind, that blowing dry
Wrinkled the face of Deluge, as decay'd;
And the clear sun on his wide watery glass
Gazed hot, and of the fresh wave largely drew,
As after *thirst;* which made their flowing shrink
From *standing* lake to *tripping* ebb, that stole
With soft *foot* toward the deep.

This type of semi-personification includes what is one of the simplest instincts of the sensitive mind—a previous chapter[1] has mentioned it as the 'pathetic fallacy' of Ruskin. This is the instinct of reading human emotions into the elements of nature around us, as when we speak of the angry sea, the raging fire, the greedy ocean, of the fire licking its prey, of the earth opening its mouth to swallow up. Of this nature is the powerful imagery in the Walpurgis Night of Goethe's *Faust:*[2]

Clouds frown heavily, and hearken
How the wood groans as they darken . . . .
Hearken how the tempest wrenches
Groaning trunks and crashing branches,
And the earth beneath is rifted,
And the shrieking trees uplifted—
Bole and bough and blossom cheerful,
Fair trees fall in ruin fearful;
How the haughty forest brothers
Bend and tremble! how they fall!
How they cling on one another's
Arms! each crushes each and smothers,
Till tangled, strangled, down come all;
And the wild Winds through the ruin
Are howling, hissing, and hallooing!
Down the valleys how they sweep,
Round and round, above and under,
Rend the giant cliffs asunder,

[1] Chapter xx, page 367.

[2] Anster's translation.

> And, with shout and scream appalling,
> Catch the mighty fragments falling!
> How they laugh, and how they leap,
> As they hurry off their plunder!
> Headlong steep, and gorges deep,
> Gulf, and glen, and rock, in wonder
> Echo back the stormy thunder!

In this connection it is natural to mention that strange work, the *Polyolbion* of Drayton: this describes the geography of England, but geography elevated to a poetic plane by this same device of semi-personification.

> The Taw, which from her fount forced on by amorous gales,
> And easily ambling down through the Devonian dales,
> Brings with her Moul and Bray, her banks that gently bathe,
> Which on her dainty breast, in many a silver swathe,
> She bears unto the bay where Barnstaple beholds
> How her beloved Taw clear Torridge there enfolds.

If we look at the map of Devonshire and Cornwall we note certain rivers curving in particular directions; the 'pathetic fallacy' must find a human interpretation for such curves:

> (The Torridge) seems at first to flow
> That way where Tamar strains; but, as she great doth grow,
> Remembreth to foresee what rivals she should find
> To intercept her course. Etc.

Dickens is a great master of this special variety of semi-personification. The plain fact he has to chronicle is that a sudden wind slammed Mr. Pecksniff's door in his face and tumbled him down his own front steps: but on this he enlarges in a personifying strain maintained for several paragraphs.[1]

> An evening wind uprose too, and the slighter branches cracked and rattled as they moved, in skeleton dances, to its moaning music. The withering leaves no longer quiet, hurried to and fro in search of shelter from its chill pursuit. . . . . Then the village forge came out in all

[1] *Martin Chuzzlewit*, chapter ii.

its bright importance. . . . . Out upon the angry wind! how from sighing, it began to bluster round the merry forge, banging at the wicket, and grumbling in the chimney, as if it bullied the jolly bellows for doing anything to order. And what an impotent swaggerer it was too, for all its noise; for if it had any influence on that hoarse companion, it was but to make him roar his cheerful song the louder, and by consequence to make the fire burn the brighter, and the sparks to dance more gayly yet: at length, they whizzed so madly round and round, that it was too much for such a surly wind to bear; so off it flew with a howl, giving the old sign before the ale-house door such a cuff as it went, that the Blue Dragon was more rampant than usual ever afterward. . . . . It was small tyranny for a respectable wind to go wreaking its vengeance on such poor creatures as the fallen leaves, but this wind happening to come up with a great heap of them just after venting its humor on the insulted Dragon, did so disperse and scatter them that they fled away, pell-mell, some here, some there, rolling over each other, whirling round and round upon their thin edges, taking frantic flights into the air, and playing all manner of extraordinary gambols in the extremity of their distress. Nor was this enough for its malicious fury; for not content with driving them abroad, it charged small parties of them and hunted them into the wheel-wright's saw-pit, and below the planks and timbers in the yard, and scattering the sawdust in the air, it looked for them underneath, and when it did meet with any, whew! how it drove them on and followed at their heels! The scared leaves only flew the faster for all this, and a giddy chase it was; for they got into unfrequented places, where there was no outlet, and where their pursuer kept them eddying round and round at his pleasure; and they crept under the eaves of houses, and clung tightly to the sides of hayricks like bats; and tore in at open chamber windows, and cowered close to hedges; and in short went anywhere for safety. But the oddest feat they achieved was, to take advantage of the sudden opening of Mr. Pecksniff's front door, to dash wildly into his passage; whither the wind following close upon them, and finding the back-door open, incontinently blew out the lighted candle held by Miss Pecksniff, and slammed the front door against Mr. Pecksniff, who was at that moment entering, with such violence that in the twinkling of an eye he lay on his back at the

bottom of the steps. Being by this time weary of such trifling performances, the boisterous rover hurried away rejoicing, roaring over moor and meadow, hill and flat, until it got out to sea, where it met with other winds similarly disposed, and made a night of it.

It may be thought that such an element of nature as wind lends itself easily to devices of imagery; but Dickens can infuse touches of semi-personification into the most prosaic topics: witness the bedroom of this same Blue Dragon:

It was none of your frivolous and preposterously bright bedrooms, where nobody can close an eye with any kind of propriety or decent regard to the association of ideas; but it was a good, dull, leaden, drowsy place, where every article of furniture reminded you that you came there to sleep. . . . . There was no wakeful reflection of the fire there, as in your modern chambers, which upon the darkest nights have a watchful consciousness of French polish; the old Spanish mahogany winked at it now and then, as a dozing cat or dog might, nothing more. The very size and shape, the hopeless immovability, of the bedstead, and wardrobe, and in a minor degree of even the chairs and tables, provoked sleep; they were plainly apoplectic and disposed to snore. . . . . Even the old stuffed fox upon the top of the wardrobe was devoid of any spark of vigilance, for his glass eye had fallen out, and he slumbered as he stood.

It may be added, that we have an extension of the general idea of personification into what may be called quasi-personification. Here qualities of material things are assigned to abstract ideas or to things not material; there is the same underlying notion of a scale of things, and the lifting one degree in the scale. Miltonic examples would be such as these: Horrid confusion heaped upon confusion rose; The battle swerved with many an inroad gored; The shout tore Hell's concave. In all these cases the abstract is momentarily lifted into the concrete. Finally, every art effect generates another art effect in its converse: we thus get depersonification, where a metaphorical expression is a lowering in the scale. "Satan his heart ex-

plores": consciousness is part of personality, here it is explored as if it were a country. So pain is a part of consciousness: in the Miltonic expression, "Pain which makes remiss the hands of mightiest," the beautiful metaphor *remiss* applies to this thing of personality the concrete image of the slackened bridle-rein.

It is natural to pass from personification to that which is in some measure its converse—the fable. It is true that the word *fable* has suffered, both from the natural wear and tear of language, and also from the special fact that the Latin form of the word was used by the criticism of antiquity in the sense of story or plot, and the usage was retained by Addison and other early critics. Considered however as a literary type, what constitutes the fable is that we apply the ways of the lower animals, or of vegetable life, to suggest the ways of humanity. Mere stories of animals are not fables: *Greyfriars Bobby*[1] is in the full sense a canine biography—more interesting to some of us than the majority of human biographies. But when plants or animals suggestively satirize men—when, in the phrase of Davenant, "we blush to see our politics in beasts"—then we have the literary fable. From the standpoint of poetic art, all such fables are sustained metaphors, constituted a separate type by the fact that the accessory idea is always a non-human nature, as in personifications the accessory idea is always human nature. Aesop was the Homer for the Classical fable; in the mediaeval world the 'beast epic' was of this type, evolving an elaborate masterpiece in *Reynard the Fox*.[2] In Hebrew literature the preference seems rather to have been for vegetable life as imaginative clothing of fable. Perhaps this type has never reached a higher point than in the fable with which Jotham caricatures political conditions around him, as he addresses the motley rabble escorting the base king they have

[1] By Eleanor Atkinson (Harper).

[2] Translation by F. S. Ellis (Nutt).

proclaimed in violation of the sacred tradition that Jehovah alone is king.[1]

> The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? And the trees said unto the vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to wave to and fro over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.

The fable belongs to the metaphor side of imagery—an extension of metaphor direct: it is tempting to correlate with it the parable as holding a corresponding relation to the simile. If the parables of Jesus may be taken as the norm, these regularly contain the comparative particle: the Kingdom of Heaven is *likened* to something on earth. But so many lines of meaning meet in the word 'parable' that it is not safe to take this as a literary type.

I proceed to particular varieties of literary art which I shall group together under the name of moving imagery. Of these the most important is that which may be called the dramatic background of nature. This is especially a device of modern poetry, and William Morris is its great master. External nature makes a suitable background for incidents of human life. These are seen in a surrounding of open-air scenery; or, if they do not take place in the open air, there is at least an element of

[1] Judges 9:8.

nature implied in the sunlight or accompaniments of night. There is a tendency in modern poetry to emphasize this background of nature. In dramatic poetry this is obvious: the ancient stage was limited to exterior scenes, in which the light would be uniform; the modern stage, combining exterior with interior scenes, makes copious use of natural scenery and light effects for dramatic emphasis. In the poetry that is narrated there is a similar tendency, by reiterated touches of detail, to keep before the reader's attention the nature surroundings of important incidents; and in some cases to suggest sudden or continuous changes in the background of nature, a movement in the scene that mystically harmonizes with the movement of the incidents themselves. This is the technical device here styled the dramatic background of nature. It must, of course, be distinguished from more general descriptions of nature, with which modern poetry abounds, but which, however interesting in their intrinsic beauty, have no essential relationship to the movement of the poem in which they occur.

Conspicuous examples are such as these. In the finale of Marlowe's *Faustus*,[1] the hero, watching through his last hour on earth, has his attention caught by a black cloud, slowly and silently rising, measuring its advance (and so measuring the lapse of the hour) by the stars it successively blots out, until precisely at midnight it bursts in the thunderstorm of doom. At one point of its advance, it would seem as if the Northern Lights had suddenly flashed in the sky, as suddenly to vanish: the popular name of these Northern Lights, which connects them with streaming blood, makes the apparition suggest to Faustus the thought of the blood of Christ, but with the disappearance the momentary hope changes to despair. The ascending cloud breaks into strange forms: suggesting the threatening arm of God, beetling mountains, yawning caves

[1] This is somewhat more fully presented in *World Literature*, pages 228–31.

that refuse their shelter. As the storm bursts we can mark, in Faustus' cries, the first sound of the whistling wind, of the rain pattering upon the roof; the sheet lightning that seems the fierce countenance of God, the forked lightning that plays like adders and serpents around the doomed man. This rising cloud that thus measures the advance of doom is an example of dramatic background of nature.

Again: the last phase of the dialogue in Job (from 36:24) is accompanied—so the words of Elihu suggest—by a slowly gathering rainstorm, increasing to thunder (37:1), and at last to pitchy darkness (37:19) and whirlwind: this whirlwind changes into the voice of Deity. In *Paradise Lost*, as the long-drawn excitement of the temptation reaches the actual crisis of the Fall, there is a sudden shiver and groan throughout external nature:

> So saying, her rash hand in evil hour
> Forth reaching to the fruit, she pluck't, she ate;
> Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat
> Sighing through all her works gave signs of woe
> That all was lost.

The effect is repeated as Adam makes the Fall complete:

> Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
> In pangs, and Nature gave a second groan;
> Sky lowr'd, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
> Wept at completing of the mortal sin.[1]

There is a bold suggestion of the effect in Wagner's *Valkyrie:* the opening door makes a sudden revelation of spring at the critical moment of Sigmund's passion for Sieglinda. Perhaps the finest illustration of all is in Tennyson's ballad of *The Sisters:* by a refrain in each verse the wind is kept before us, dramatically accompanying successive stages of the horror by its changes—*blowing*, *howling*, *roaring*, *raging*, *raving*, back to *blowing* as the crisis is past.

[1] *Paradise Lost*, ix, 780, 1000.

We were two daughters of one race:
She was the fairest in the face:
The wind is blowing in turret and tree.
They were together, and she fell;
Therefore revenge became me well.
O the Earl was fair to see!

She died; she went to burning flame:
She mix'd her ancient blood with shame.
The wind is howling in turret and tree.
Whole weeks and months, and early and late,
To win his love I lay in wait:
O the Earl was fair to see!

I made a feast; I bade him come;
I won his love, I brought him home,
The wind is roaring in turret and tree.
And after supper, on a bed,
Upon my lap he laid his head.
O the Earl was fair to see!

I kissed his eyelids into rest:
His ruddy cheek upon my breast.
The wind is raging in turret and tree.
I hated him with the hate of hell,
But I loved his beauty passing well.
O the Earl was fair to see!

I rose up in the silent night:
I made my dagger sharp and bright.
The wind is raving in turret and tree.
As half-asleep his breath he drew,
Three times I stabb'd him thro' and thro'.
O the Earl was fair to see!

I curl'd and comb'd his comely head,
He look'd so grand when he was dead.
The wind is blowing in turret and tree.
I wrapt his body in the sheet,
And laid him at his mother's feet.
O the Earl was fair to see.

In Morris' poem of *Sigurd the Volsung*, this treatment is applied to every important incident, and worked out in great detail; such dramatic background of nature makes one of the most characteristic features of the poem viewed from the side of art. The central incident, the awakening of Brynhild,[1] is drawn out with great elaboration—the riding over the heath, the Shield-burg, the mound with the recumbent figure on it, the ripping of the armor which reveals the sleeping woman. As we follow through the long sense of expectation to the climax, we find the gradual approach of daylight indicated by continuous touches and fine gradations of light: the glimmering twilight, the new-risen moon paling, the stars growing faint with day; the earliest wind of dawning agitating the golden buckler, the light from the yellowing east beaming soft on the wall of shields; as Sigurd faces the earth-mound the dawn is growing about it; the sword that rips open the armor burns bright with the clearing east; he kneels over the fair form—

> While soft the waves of the daylight o'er the starless heavens speed,
> And the gleaming rims of the Shield-burg yet bright and brighter grow,
> And the thin moon hangeth her horns dead-white in the golden glow.

At last the risen sun suddenly bathes in morning glory the embrace that begins Sigurd's day of love. So with the other incidents that open the hero's glorious career—the slaying of Fafnir,[2] the winning the World's Treasure[3]—there is an accompaniment of approaching day. On the contrary, the approach of Sigurd to the Burg of the Niblungs is mystically accompanied with suggestions of day giving place to night, of cloud-threatenings and angry heavens; and the effect is repeated

[1] *Sigurd the Volsung* (Longmans), pages 135–40.

[2] *Sigurd*, pages 121–27. [3] *Ibid.*, pages 132–34.

when he returns to the same spot after his night journey of bewilderment.[1] Night scenery in its successive stages is kept before us all through the awful crisis of Brynhild being claimed by the semblance of Gunnar;[2] here morning comes as the close, not the goal, of the incident. So the long suspense of waiting for the murder of Sigurd[3] is punctuated by stages in the passing of night—the waning moonlight, the fading torches. Yet again: as Gunnar sings his death-song in the pit of snakes, the moon lights up his harp; he dies in the *chill* of morning.[4] The final doom of Atli's hosts has a night accompaniment: the rising sun is met by the smoke of the burning hall; the feasters awake from their stupor to a day of Hell.[5] It may be added, that all this is part of a sustained color harmony that pervades the whole poem: with colors of night for the Niblungs, gold and brightness for the Volsungs, for Brynhild the soft whiteness of the swan. When Gudrun first meets Brynhild—

> In the hall her arms shine white,
> And her hair falls down behind her like a cloak of the sweet-breathed night. . . . .
> But lo, as a swan on the sea spreads out her wings to arise
> From the face of the darksome ocean when the isle before her lies,
> So Brynhild arose from her throne and the fashioned cloths of blue
> When she saw the Maid of the Niblungs, and the face of Gudrun knew.[6]

Not only is this dramatic background of nature a specially modern effect, but it seems to be the substitute in modern poetic art for the elaborated similes of Homer and Virgil and Milton. *Sigurd the Volsung* is the only modern epic that can be paralleled with these. In *Sigurd* similes are conspicuous by their comparative absence: there are long tracts of the poem without a single example; of elaborate similes there are few, and briefer ones are

[1] *Sigurd*, pages 170–77, 190–91.
[2] *Ibid.*, pages 208–18.
[3] *Ibid.*, pages 255–60.
[4] *Ibid.*, pages 334–37.
[5] *Ibid.*, pages 344–46.
[6] *Ibid.*, page 152.

not abundant. The explanation seems to be this. The great proportion of similes in Homer and Milton are founded on external nature; thus threads of nature scenery are, by this device of imagery, woven into incidents of human life. In Morris, the same—or an even greater—amount of nature detail is introduced into the scenes of the story, but it is made more of an actuality, and less of a mere comparison. External nature is kept before us in continual notes of place (that is scenery) and time (movement of day and night). And in this effect of dramatic background, instead of the nature details being imported from outside for comparison, they are made a part of the incident, moving in mystic harmony with human events. There is still the association between separate trains of ideas, but it is a dynamic, not a static association. It is imagery, but it is moving imagery.

When once we have recognized moving imagery, we can see that a second variety of literary art to be referred to this heading is the allegory. Here, as in all imagery, the essence is a comparison between two disconnected trains of ideas; one is actual—part of the thought of the poem, what we have called the originating idea; the other is only brought in for comparison. But the distinguishing point of allegory is that in this the extraneous or accessory train of ideas fills the whole field of action: it is the actual and essential thought that is left for inference. What the *Pilgrim's Progress* is engaged in describing is a City of Destruction, an escape from this, an arbor in which a roll is lost, an Interpreter's House, a Vanity Fair, Delectable Mountains, a river to be waded through. But every reader knows that these are not the realities of the poem: they are the shadows or images, comparison with which is giving him the real thoughts as he proceeds from beginning to finish. Allegory is imagery, and imagery that is moving with the movement of a story, as it suggests a corresponding movement of thought in the background.

CHART XXV

Poetic Ornament

Resting on Accessory Ideas Imported for Comparison

Imagery = Pictorial Comparison

- Simile = Formal Imagery
- Metaphor = Veiled Imagery: the interest resting on the degree of veiling—extreme in metaphor direct and concealed imagery
- Specialized Imagery
  - Personification and Depersonification (the accessory idea always human personality)
  - The Fable (the accessory idea non-human personality)
- Moving Imagery
  - Dramatic Background of Nature
  - Allegory: Suggestive Background of Thought

Symbolism = Conventional Comparison—resting on

- Traditional Standards of Comparison
- Interest of Initial Mystery
  - Riddles and Riddling Symbolism
  - Dumb Show in Drama (cf. oratorical gestures)
  - Emblem Prophecy, especially in Ezekiel (cf. Text and Sermon)
  - Emblem Poetry of the Middle Ages
  - Visions and Dreams (emblems externally presented)

II

The varieties of poetic ornament so far considered sum up as imagery: the accessory idea in all of them is an image, and the appeal of the comparison is to the pictorial power of the imagination. There remain other elements of poetic effect which, like these, involve an essential detail of a poem and an extraneous idea imported for comparison; but the comparison in these cases appeals to something other than imaginative beauty; nay, it often happens that the inhibition of such imaginative picturing is essential for the effect. These constitute symbolism.[1] It is specially characteristic of oriental literature, and comes into our world poetry chiefly through the Bible. It must be understood that I am not referring to religious or theological symbolism, such as that which makes The Song of Songs typical of the relations between Christ and his church. Symbolic reading of this kind belongs to secondary interpretation. But in the primary interpretation of the Bible as literature the distinction between imagery and symbolism is important.

We may approach the subject by particular examples. The Song of Songs is a love poem.[2] The heroine, expatiating upon the charms of her lover, says—

> His head is of the most fine gold . . . .

If the sentence stopped here, this might be an image: just the image which Shakespeare uses when he says—

> Golden lads and lasses must,
> Like chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

[1] It is hardly necessary to remark that this is only one out of many meanings of the word *symbolism*.

[2] Symbolism as it appears in this poem is discussed in *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 220–24. (Part of this is incorporated in the present discussion.) A more detailed discussion will be found in the Introduction to the poem in the *Modern Reader's Bible*.

But her sentence continues:

> His head is of the most fine gold;
> His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.

The two statements seem incompatible. But they are contradictory *only* when we seek to visualize the comparison: no picture can possibly paint the same hair as both golden and raven black. Reading symbolically, we understand a reference only to traditionally accepted standards of beauty: gold is the highest thing of its class, then my love's hair is of gold; raven black is the supreme type of black, then my love's hair must have the raven's gloss. So again, when the king enumerates his queen's attractions, he compares her nose to "the tower of Lebanon which looketh toward Damascus." To the western reader, who must visualize everything, the effect is comic; the symbolist, trained in imaginative restraint, sees only comparison with a famous landscape in which the tower of Lebanon is (so to speak) the center of expression. Modern readers find in Solomon's Song a sensuous emphasis which disappears in the reserve of symbolic interpretation. When the general principle has been caught, it is easy to recognize the guarded treatment in Solomon's Song of what borders on the sensuous. Maidenhood becomes a garden shut up; chastity, in contrast with too facile disposition, is veiled under symbols of wall and door. The enraptured gaze of the bridegroom bending over his bride at the feast is disguised as 'a banner of love' waving over her. The sweet surrender of the maiden to her spouse is symbolically put:

> They made me keeper of the vineyards;
> But mine own vineyard have I not kept!

The Shulammite does not in plain terms clasp her lover to her breast, but the refrain bids him be as a roe upon 'the mountains of separation.' Symbolism is a form of reserve; it is this veiled treatment of topics excluded from direct western speech which

has enabled the Bible to provide the great Honeymoon Song of the world.

Another passage of Biblical literature will both illustrate this imaginative reserve and also lead us to a second basis for symbolic comparison. The opening of the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes[1] impresses every reader with its sustained poetic beauty. Yet the actuality to which so many poetic thoughts are attached is the most prosaic and unlovely of topics: nothing else than the symptoms of senile decay and the death that follows. The treatment will stand out the clearer by comparison with a highly realistic picture of old age that comes from a great Elizabethan poet. I have space only for a single stanza.

> Crookback'd he was, tooth-shaken, and blear-eyed:
> Went on three feet, and sometimes crept on four;
> With old lame bones, that rattled by his side,
> His scalp all pill'd, and he with age forlore;
> His wither'd fist still knocking at death's door;
> Tumbling and drivelling as he draws his breath:
> For brief, the shape and messenger of death.

With this compare the symbolic treatment in Ecclesiastes:

> Or ever the evil days come,
> And the years draw nigh
> When thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.
>
> Or ever the sun,
> And the light,
> And the moon,
> And the stars,
> Be darkened,
> And the clouds return after the rain;

[1] This is also discussed in the passage of *Literary Study of the Bible* mentioned in note 2 to page 434; and part of the discussion is incorporated here.

In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble,
And the strong men shall bow themselves,
And the grinders cease because they are few,
And those that look out of the windows be darkened,
And the doors shall be shut in the streets;

When the sound of the grinding is low,
And one shall rise up at the voice of a bird,
And all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

Yea, they shall be afraid of that which is high,
And terrors shall be in the way;

And the almond tree shall blossom,
And the grasshopper shall be a burden,
And the caper-berry shall burst:

Because man goeth to his long home,
And the mourners go about the streets.

Or ever the silver cord be loosed,
Or the golden bowl be broken,
Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain,
Or the wheel broken at the cistern:

And the dust return to the earth
As it was;
And the spirit return to God
Who gave it.

In the powerful vision of Sackville every detail paints a repellent picture; the Biblical poem introduces ideas which have no visible resemblance to the spectacle of old age, and the comparison they call for stirs a melancholy pleasure. Light fitly symbolizes the joy of mere existence: the darkening of sun and moon and stars recalls the gradual loss of pleasure in life for its own sake. Youth with its troubles and quick rallying knows only the summer showers: when the rallying power is gone, "the clouds return after the rain." The "wither'd fist still

knocking at death's door" stamps the picture of the infirmity upon the imagination: the shaking hands recede into the distance when, with a whole group of like infirmities, they are represented by the elements of panic in a city—trembling keepers, strong men bowed down, grinders ceasing to work and spectators to look out of windows, while every door is made fast. Similar dim symbols just touch the loss of appetite, of sleep, of voice; the timid and uncertain gait; the sparse hairs of age, its feeble strength. The sudden bursting of the caper-berry that has been long shriveling up marks the transition to the reality that is being symbolized:

> Man goeth to his long home,
> And the mourners go about the streets.

For the actual death that puts a period to the gradual decay other apt symbols follow: the house lamp of gold that has been secretly straining its silver chain now suddenly dropped and extinguished; the pitcher that has gone daily to the fountain, the cistern wheel that so long has mechanically turned, at last broken and useless. A long string of life's dull infirmities, from all of which realistic imagery must shrink as things unlovely, has been transformed into a thing of enduring beauty by casting over it the softening veil of symbolism.

The comparisons in this poem we may recognize as riddling comparisons. So successful has the riddle been in this case that the whole passage, by prosaic interpreters, has been read as an on-coming storm, as a picture of a siege, as a medical enumeration of physiological details some of which need an expert anatomist to identify.[1] This idea of riddling comparison makes a second basis for symbolism. It must be remembered that the riddle of modern popular amusement is a feeble representative of the poetic riddles that figure so largely in early

[1] Compare the history of the interpretation of the poem in Ginsburg's valuable edition.

literature. An illustration or two may be quoted, preserved for us in the *Exeter Book*.[1]

Together came
sixty men
to the wave-shore
on horses riding;
they had eleven
(the associates)
war-horses,
four white ones.
These comrades could not
pass o'er the sea,
as they desired,
for the flood was too deep,
dire the billow's force,
the shores high,
the streams strong.
Resolv'd then to mount
the men on a wain,
and their horses together;
they loaded amid the wave
which bore away the horses,
the steeds, and men
arm'd with spears,
over the water's swell,
the wain to land;
so that no ox drew it,
nor power of men,
nor fat stallion,
nor swam it on the flood,
nor on the ground waded
under its guests,
nor did the water drive it,
nor flew it in the air,
nor turn'd back,
yet it brought
the men over the bourne
and their horses with them
from the high shore,
so that they step'd up
on to the other
the bold
men from the waves
and their horses sound.

The answer to this riddle I understand to be a Bridge: to the next it is a Dream.

Writings say
that there is a creature
with mankind
oftentimes
plain and visible;
it has special craft,
greater by much
than men know of;
it will seek
every one separately
bearing life,
departs again on its way;
it is not ever
there a second night,
but it must always
with exile's track
homeless wander,
yet is not the viler.

[1] Thorpe's translation.

It has nor foot nor hand,
nor earth ever touch'd,
nor eyes,
either of the two,
nor mouth has it,
nor speech with men,
nor has it understanding;
but writings say
that it is poorest
of all creatures
which after their kinds
have been brought forth.
It has nor soul nor life,
but it fates shall
through this wonder world
amply endure.
It has no blood nor bones,
yet has to children been
throughout this mid-earth
to many a comfort.
Heaven it never touched
nor to hell may go,
but it shall always
in the King of glories'
doctrines live.
Long is to say
how its life
afterwards goes
the tortuous decrees of fate.
That is a curious thing
to tell of;
true is everything
which concerning this creature
we by words signify.
It has not any limb,
yet lives nevertheless.
If thou canst riddles
quickly tell
in true words
say what it is called.

The poetic riddle is one kind of symbolism; the answer is the actuality, the riddle itself is the extraneous idea imported for comparison. But the comparison excludes pictorial or exact resemblance: there must be more of mystery than of congruity as between the symbol and the thing symbolized. It illustrates what is a leading function of symbolism: to raise an attitude of wonder or expectation, which glorifies the often trivial actuality when it comes.

This interest of initial mystery applies to another poetic device: the dumb show which, in the early poetry of the Renaissance, was used to introduce a drama, or a particular act in a drama. Thus the first act of *Gorboduc* was preceded by a dumb show of the faggot that could not be broken until it was separated into sticks: the act that follows exhibits a king proposing to divide his kingdom between his two sons. The

second act is introduced by a dumb show of a king rejecting good wine offered him on the one side and accepting poison offered on the other side: the scenes of the act give us, successively, Ferrex and Porrex placed similarly between good and evil counselors. And every reader remembers the example in *Hamlet*, how the Murder of Gonzago—the play introduced into the third act—is prefaced by a dumb show of poison poured into a sleeper's ear. The dumb show is the initial symbol: the action of the play is the reality to which it is attached. But such dumb show is not imitation: to precede a dramatic scene by a well-executed oil painting of the scene would produce no literary effect at all. The symbolic prelude generates an attitude of wonder, which gives emphasis to the dramatic action when it comes.

Of the same nature is another literary type, of considerable importance in the Bible, and in the literature inspired by it. This may be called emblem literature.[1]

If Prophecy in general is in the form of discourses, Symbolic prophecies are discourses with texts; but the texts taken by the prophets are not, like the texts of modern sermons, quotations from the sacred writings, but object-texts, that is, external objects treated symbolically. Perhaps modern life has approached nearest to such Symbolic Prophecy in the 'Emblem Literature,' now forgotten, but for a century or two the chief reading of the religious world. This Emblem Literature was made up of sermons in verse with hieroglyphic texts. To take a typical case. One of Quarles's emblems represents a balance; in one scale of this balance worlds (represented conventionally by balls with cross handles) are being heaped up; the other scale contains nothing, but a mouth is seen blowing into it, and this empty scale weighs down the heaped-up worlds on the other side.

[1] What follows is taken from *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 372 ff. The general subject of symbolic prophecy is discussed in pages 372–83 (compare also page 523) of that work. Another discussion in the Introduction to Ezekiel in the *Modern Reader's Bible*.

This hieroglyphic is the text: on the opposite page a poetic sermon works out with vigour the thought that worldly goods are less than empty breath. In the same way there is an Emblem Prophecy which has for its texts, not exactly pictures, but visible things or actions. Jeremiah is commanded to wear a linen girdle in the eyes of the people; when they have become accustomed to it he is to take the girdle off and hide it in a hole of the rock; several days after he is to show it again, marred and profitable for nothing. This is to be a text, from which he will preach how Judah, that ought to cleave to the Lord as the girdle cleaveth to the figure, shall for their sins be seen to be marred and useless. Or again, the same prophet is led to watch the potter at work, aiming at one kind of vessel, but if the clay is marred making it at his pleasure into a vessel of a different kind: from this text he will proclaim that Israel in the hands of Jehovah is but the clay in the hands of the potter.

Of such emblem literature a variant is the literary dream and vision: the difference is that, instead of the emblem being initiated by the speaker, it comes to him from without; in the dream it comes in sleep, in the vision it is presented by supernatural machinery. But the spirit of all these forms is an appeal to mystery, not to pictorial resemblance. The poetic dream must be obscure: the event resolves it into clearness. The most elaborate vision offers nothing beyond a symbol, which yet awaits interpretation. The popular fallacy supposes a vision in Biblical literature to be a sort of supernatural telescope, such as would enable Ezekiel in the Far East to see what was going on at the moment in Jerusalem;[1] or a reader of Revelation[2] to see incidents and events of future ages. The visions have the force of the supernatural; but what is thus revealed is not incidents and events, but mystic symbols, which only the actual events will interpret.

[1] Ezekiel, chapter 8; compare *Literary Study of the Bible*, page 381.

[2] Compare Introduction to St. John's Revelation in *Modern Reader's Bible* (or *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 471–76).

I have elsewhere[1] dealt at length with the symbolic literature of Scripture, and all the rich variety it has in the hands of its great master Ezekiel. One detail has relevance here. There are certain discourses of Ezekiel in which, for one reason or another, the initial symbol is lacking. Its place seems to be supplied by another literary device: as the discourse proceeds a particular train of ideas is found to pervade the whole and bring it into a unity. The doom of Tyre—the great mercantile community of the prophetic world—is elaborated in the description of the wreck of the goodly ship Tyre; Egypt is denounced in a train of ideas presenting a river monster; Assyria appears as a fallen cedar; restored Israel is pictured with a multitude of details building up an exquisite scene of pastoral peace.[2] Now, all this is simply sustained imagery. We are reminded how close are symbolism and imagery: they have the same function of association between what is real and what is suggested for comparison. The appeal of imagery is to pictorial beauty. The basis for the various forms of symbolism may be expressed by saying that symbolism is conventional comparison. The illustrations from the poetry of Solomon's Song we saw to be appeals to conventionally accepted standards of beauty. Other forms—the riddle, the emblem—appeal to a conventionally established form of poetic thought, which begins in obscurity and wonder, and develops into interpretative clearness.

This chapter has run to undue length. But the analysis it attempts is designed to prepare for the variety of demands which poetic ornamentation will be found to make upon the sympathetic reader. To confuse between one type of beauty and another is simply to misunderstand. We have seen how the reading of symbolic poetry with a mental focus adjusted to

[1] Introduction to Ezekiel in *Modern Reader's Bible.*

[2] Compare Ezekiel, chapter 27; 29:1–16; chapters 31, 34.

imaginative picturing is to mar the whole effect. A similar error is seen where readers complain of the heaven of Milton's poem as being material—with its golden pavement and gates of pearl—not catching that these are echoes of symbols consecrated by long literary usage. We even hear at times of the "lurid" character of Christian literature, with its insistent emphasis on ideas of blood. But such an impression implies a narrow literary outlook. How far the original is from such suggestion is sufficiently evidenced by the single descriptive phrase telling of those who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The wide range of poetic ornament demands from readers of poetry a flexibility of appreciation, ready at any moment to enhance a detail of reality with pictorial color, or to shroud it in the mystery of symbolic reserve.

CHAPTER XXV

LITERARY ECHOING: THE CONCEPTION OF LITERATURE AS A SECOND NATURE

I

This will be a short chapter on a very large subject. Indeed, we may almost say that the one half of poetic effect rests upon a basis of what is here called literary echoing. We have already seen[1] how, in the maturity of poetry that follows the Renaissance, the saneness of its balance depends on the union of the Romantic and the Classic, as the centrifugal and centripetal impulses in poetry: the Romantic, that looks to freshness and novelty; the Classic, that tunes itself in harmony with accepted forms, and gives to what is intrinsically beautiful the added beauty of familiarity and reminiscence.

What is implied is not the mere fact that certain poets use traditional material: the echoing extends to the minutest details—epithets, names, sentence structure, conventional turns of expression. An otiose acceptance of the fact that there is resemblance will not do: the resemblances are reminiscences, and yet reminiscences subdued to the delicate faintness of the 'echo.' Readers steeped in the poetry of Virgil and Milton understand well what is meant: for those who need explanation the literary echo can only be illustrated by a large body of detailed examples. Elsewhere,[2] in a discussion of Milton, I have endeavored to provide this at considerable length; though I feel the unsatisfactoriness of such treatment, which is like the attempt to explain humor. What we are here concerned with is the place of all this in literary theory. Two points may be

[1] Above, chapter iv, page 88.

[2] *World Literature*, pages 196–219.

noted. In the phrase of the late Professor Conington[1]—who more than anyone else has emphasized this feature of poetic art—poetic accumulations of the past become to each poet of the classical succession a 'second nature,' and 'truth to nature' becomes felicitous reminiscence of the familiar. Again: in pure imaginative creation—that contrasts with realistic story—each new departure involves an imaginative effort on the part of the reader; some coherence with the poetry of the past gives a kind of support for the novelty, and for the world of imagination reminiscence takes the place of evidence.

In any kind of literature the effect of echoing the past may appear: but there are three fields of poetry which are specially 'Classical' in this sense.

When we make Hellenic civilization one of the bases of modern culture, it must be remembered that the literary representation of this is not the national literatures of Greece and Rome, but only that small proportion of these which has grown apart as a separate literature under the name of 'Classics.' The first masterpieces of Greek poetry, and the successors and imitations of these, make a closed circle of poetry, in which the same matter and forms are reiterated, while each poet of this Classical succession seems to value himself most on the degree to which his poetry reflects the poetry that has preceded him. Chief of this Classical succession is Virgil, who comes at the end, and depends more than any other poet upon the reminiscent element in his works. The *Eclogues* of Virgil seem to have little positive poetic quality except that his Roman creations should think the thoughts, and speak in the forms, and often in the names, of Sicilian predecessors. And even the great epic dedicated to the providential mission of the Roman Empire is occupied with laying the foundations of this conception in the field of Homeric poetry.[2]

[1] Introduction to the *Eclogues* in his edition of Virgil.

[2] Compare *World Literature*, pages 157–62.

Again: it is the same with the second of our foundation civilizations: its literary representation is not the whole literary output of the Hebrew people, but that extremely small part of it which constitutes the books of the Bible. Though the term is not often so used, yet in truth these are the 'Classics' of Hebraism. The spirit that binds these into a unity is still closer than that of Greek Classics. Hence the great masterpiece of literary echoing is found in the poem that closes the Bible and serves as its epilogue. This Revelation[1] takes the form of a succession of mystic visions, moving with increasing mystery to a central point, at which the shout of all heaven's hosts proclaims the key to all mystery in the recognition of Jesus Christ, supreme over all authorities, center of all history. What these visions present is, not events and incidents, but symbols; all of them veiled echoes of Old Testament symbols; the light of prophecy changes into converging rays of light, all pointing to Jesus Christ.

But there is a third field of Classical effect: such modern poetry as leans to the Classical, rather than to the Romantic, of its component elements. Hence a supreme master of literary echoing appears in Milton: he is on a par with Virgil in the degree to which he uses literary reminiscence, and he goes far beyond Virgil in the width of the literary field from which the associations are drawn.[2] To Milton, Greek and Hebrew Classics make a single literature; Hebrew thought for him clothes itself naturally in Greek form; almost every line of Milton strikes a note which finds echoes from all over the poetry of the past. No doubt a Milton is coherent and intelligible apart from the associative value of his writing. But the

[1] For the general effect compare Introduction to Revelation in the *Modern Reader's Bible* (or *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 471–76). For details, see Notes to Revelation in the *Modern Reader's Bible*, where the original passages and the echoes are given in parallel columns.

[2] Compare *World Literature*, pages 196–219.

difference between such bare intelligence and the full poetic effect is as great as the difference between the cold clearness of a gray day and the radiant warmth of a sunset.

II

It may be well to illustrate two specialized forms which the general principle of literary echoing sometimes takes.

The first case is where the effect of reminiscence attaches solely to the shaping or molding of an incident, while as regards matter and expression there is nothing of resemblance. We may take an example from Spenser's *Faerie Queene.* The hero of the Second Book, the representative of Temperance, is among other trials subjected to the temptation of Mammon, and the seventh canto is given up to this topic. In its form this incident is closely modeled upon Biblical temptations, though of course personages and matter and thought are altogether unlike. A figure on page 449 (Chart XXVI) suggests the parallelism.

The first nineteen stanzas of Spenser's canto are outside the incident with which we are dealing: they are devoted to the shock of the encounter between two opposite ideals, the ideal of chivalry and the ideal of mammon. The Temptation itself commences where Guyon, amazed at the sight of the vast wealth, wonders whence it could have come, and is bidden to see for himself.

> "Come thou" (quoth he) "and see." So by and by
> Through that thick covert he him led, and fownd
> A darkesome way, which no man could descry,
> That deep descended through the hollow grownd,
> And was with dread and horror compassed arownd.
>
> At length they came into a larger space,
> That stretcht itself into an ample playne;
> Through which a beaten broad high way did trace,
> That streight did lead to Plutoe's griesly rayne.

CHART XXVI

The Literary Echo Applied to the Molding of Incident

Jesus led into the wilderness by the devil

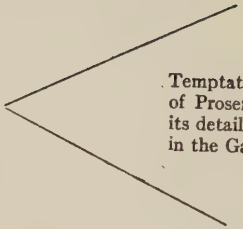
Three distinct Temptations

each with suitable change of locality
each formally presented
each rejected with a saying of Scripture

Guyon led into the underworld by Mammon

Three distinct Temptations

each with suitable change of locality
each formally presented
each rejected with a maxim of chivalry



Temptation in the Garden of Proserpina—echoing in its details the Temptation in the Garden of Eden

Jesus hungers: angels minister to him

Guyon faints: an angel ministers to him

By that wayes side there sate internal Payne,
And fast beside him sat tumultuous Strife:
The one in hand an yron whip did strayne,
The other brandished a bloody knife;
And both did gnash their teeth, and both did threten life.

On thother side in one consort there sate
Cruell Revenge, and rancorous Despight,
Disloyall Treason, and hart-burning Hate;
But gnawing Gealousy, out of their sight
Sitting alone, his bitter lips did bight;
And trembling Feare still to and fro did fly,
And found no place where safe he shroud him might;
Lamenting Sorrow did in darkness lye,
And Shame his ugly face did hide from living eye.

And over them sad Horror with grim hew
Did alwaies sore, beating his yron wings;
And after him Owles and Night-ravens flew,
The hatefull messengers of evil things,
Of death and dolor telling sad tidings;
Whiles sad Celeno, sitting on a clifte,
A song of bale and bitter sorrow sings,
That hart of flint asonder could have rifte;
Which having ended after him she flyeth swifte.

All these before the gates of Pluto lay,
By whom they passing spake unto them nought;
But th' elfin knight with wonder all the way
Did feed his eyes, and fild his inner thought.
At last him to a litle dore he brought,
That to the gate of Hell, which gaped wide,
Was next adjoyning, ne them parted ought:
Betwixt them both was but a little stride,
That did the house of Richesse from hell-mouth divide.

Before the dore sat selfe-consuming Care
Day and night keeping wary watch and ward,
For feare lest Force or Fraud should unaware
Breake in, and spoil the treasure there in gard:

Ne would he suffer Sleepe once thither-ward
Approch, albe his drowsy den were next;
For next to death is Sleepe to be compard;
Therefore his house is unto his annext:
Here Sleep, ther Richesse, and Hell-gate them both betwext.

All this is only the opening phase of the incident: Guyon led by Mammon into the darksome underworld is the parallel to Jesus led into the wilderness to be tempted. But I have cited the passage in full because the details of the description illustrate other effects of poetic echo, different from what is our immediate subject. When the hero of the *Aeneid* is led by the Sybil into the world of Shades, as they pass the boundary, Virgil surrounds them with shadowy personifications of the thoughts we associate with death—Grief, Cares, pale Diseases, sad Old Age, and the like.[1] So when Sackville's hero[2] is led by Sorrow into the same underworld, they encounter a similar group of personified associations—Remorse, Dread, Old Age, and others. Spenser, we see, peoples the same path to the world below with similar pictorial figures. Milton, introducing us suddenly to Chaos, surrounds personified Chaos with personified Night, Rumour, Chance, Discord.[3] Each of these devices powerfully recalls the others; though—with the freedom that distinguishes the poetic echo from mere imitation—Sackville is found to expand into a shadowy sculpture gallery of personification what the other poets touch with only momentary pictorial effect. It might be added that even in the course of this description other reminiscences present themselves. The name Celeno is a formal allusion to a story of the *Aeneid*.[4] The location of the House of Riches and the House of Sleep

[1] *Aeneid* vi. 273–81.

[2] Sackville's *Induction to the Mirror for Magistrates* (at full length in Southey's *British Poets*).

[3] *Paradise Lost*, ii, 951–67.

[4] *Aeneid* iii. 345.

on either side of Hell-Gate is a double echo: of Virgil's word,[1] "Death's own brother Sleep"; and of the saying, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven!"

We now have the Triple Temptation of Mammon. The first temptation is to Wealth in Store. It is the spirit of the miser, and the scene in which it is presented is idealized on the basis of the miser's strong room: rudest defenses for most precious treasures, with suggestions of the bloodshed and cruelty called for by their defense. The offer of this treasure is formally made. It is rejected with the Maxim of Honor: to be lord of those that have treasure, not to have and be its slave. The second temptation is Wealth-Production: we see idealized manufacturing of wealth in surroundings that echo the Cyclops[2] at their metallurgic work. There is again the formal offer, and the rejection with another saying of the code of chivalry—the Maxim of Contentment: All that I need I have. With another change of location we reach the third temptation—to what wealth can bring—mystically exhibited in the elaborate Temple of 'Philotime' or Ambition. The formal offer of this Philotime to Guyon for bride is rejected with the Maxim of Chivalrous Constancy:

> To change love causeless, is reproach to warlike knight.

There remains only the final phase of the incident, that will be parallel to the hunger of Jesus and angelic ministration. But before this comes another incident is interposed. This proves to be an echo of the other great Biblical Temptation: the matter that makes the basis of *Paradise Regained* is interrupted only to introduce the matter that makes the basis of *Paradise Lost*. We have once more a Temptation in a Garden: the Garden of Proserpina—with all its associations of

[1] In the passage referred to above: vi. 273–81.

[2] *Ibid.* viii. 407–53.

poetic legend—replaces the Garden of Eden. Amid its black vegetation the Tree of Mammon's Temptation bears apples of gold: the phrase has only to be mentioned, and around it cluster allusions to all the famous stories of classic poetry in which the fascination of apples of gold is the starting-point.

> Their fruit were golden apples glistring bright,
> That goodly was their glory to behold:
> On earth like never grew, ne living wight
> Like ever saw, but they from hence were sold;
> For those which Hercules, with conquest bold
> Got from great Atlas daughters, hence began,
> And planted there did bring forth fruit of gold;
> And those with which th' Eubaean young man wan
> Swift Atalanta, when with craft he her outran.
>
> Here also sprong that goodly golden fruit
> With which Acontius got his lover trew,
> Whom he had long time sought with fruitlesse suit:
> Here eke that famous golden Apple grew,
> The which among the gods false Ate threw;
> For which th' Idaean Ladies disagreed,
> Till partial Paris dempt it Venus dew,
> And had of her fayre Helen for his meed,
> That many noble Greekes and Trojans made to bleed.

Where Eve and Adam succumb, Guyon resists. Here, then, the incident may complete its form. Guyon faints with exhaustion of the strain; but even in telling this the poet brings in the echo of "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." When Guyon reaches the outer air he swoons: the canto that succeeds opens with an angel hovering over him, and the general thought of angelic ministration:

> How oft do they their silver bowers leave
> To come to succour us that succour want!
> How oft do they with golden pineons cleave
> The flitting skyes, like flying Pursuivant,
> Against fowle feendes to aid us militant!

They for us fight, they watch and dewly ward,
And their bright Squadrons round about us plant;
And all for love, and nothing for reward.
O! why should heavenly God to men have such regard?

III

The second specialized example of the general principle is found where, not the matter or form, but the literary motives of past poetry are echoed. It is this which has given their standing in literature to certain highly artificial types or *genres* of poetry and prose. Such is the inflated euphuistic style which was epidemic at the epoch of the Renaissance. Such again is the "Gay Science"—the "metaphysics of love"—which was a reminiscence of mediaeval Courts of Love,[1] yet was the inspiration of the sonnet poetry of Petrarch and his school. Such, above all, is pastoral poetry. This seems to have had a definite start with Theocritus, and to have become a long tradition—carried on by Virgil in his *Eclogues*, by English masters like Spenser, Sidney, Ben Jonson in his *Faithful Shepherdess* and Fletcher in his *Sad Shepherd*, and by Milton himself in his *Lycidas;* it powerfully affected Italian poetry and the opera, and in another art broke out in the Watteau patterns, and in a school of portraiture that led fine duchesses to be painted in milkmaid's costume holding in their hands the inevitable shepherd's crook. What is this pastoral poetry? Descriptions of rural life in Homer, or in Wordsworth, are totally unlike it. Pastoral poetry is a pure convention, by which the ordinary interests of life are *translated* into pastoral form as a means of idealization. Love becomes the love of a melancholy shepherd for a disdainful shepherdess; the lover's service is to guard her flocks for her, and bring offerings of dainty fruits or wanton squirrels. Competition becomes the strivings of shepherd

[1] A brief account of these may be seen in H. Morley's *First Sketch of English Literature*, pages 83–85.

boys in amoebaean song for a floral wreath; enterprise is hunting of the stag; the wisdom of age is a Meliboeus who has been at court and come back to the simple life; music is Colin Clout piping apace; even controversial theology can come in as Palinodie and Piers[1] translating into rural terms the Catholic and Protestant sentiment. So artificial a thing would hardly have maintained itself, but for the power of this principle of literary echoing. And so pastoral poetry is seen at its best when, in the hands of the great masters, this echoed motive is made to mingle with other motives of poetry. The Sixth Book of the *Faerie Queene* gives several cantos[2] to a pastoral episode; but flavors it with the motive of chivalry represented in Calidore, and brings it into contact with the rude realities of life in another conventional motive of brigandage. And, more elaborately still, Shakespeare, in *As You Like It*, gives full scope to the pastoral matter, but proceeds to play upon it a triple stream of humor—the humor of Jaques, of Orlando and Rosalind, and of Touchstone—until the artificial has been dissipated into common-sense, and unreality has been led to the practical conclusion of a quadruple wedding.[3]

[1] Spenser's *Shepheards Calender* (Maye).

[2] Cantos ix–xi of Book VI.

[3] This has been worked out in detail in chapter xv of my *Shakespeare as Artist*.

CHAPTER XXVI

LANGUAGE AS A FACTOR IN LITERARY ART

Language, as the medium in which literature expresses itself, has a natural place in literary art. At the same time, language is an independent study, or group of studies, wide in field and copious in matter, a large part of which has little or nothing to do with literature. It thus becomes a difficult problem to determine how far language is a factor in literary art.

The traditional study of literature has signally failed to solve this problem. It began with a great principle—its recognition of the Greek and Latin Classics as a citadel of literary study. This was theoretically sound, though theoretically imperfect, since (as we have seen) the Hebrew Classics have the same claim on us. But in passing from the theory to the practice of education the traditional study fell into the confusion between language and literature, in its tacit assumption that these Classical literatures were to be studied only in the original languages, an assumption that ignored the importance of translation as a substitute for or addition to study in the original. Now, in the competing claims of language and literature, language study has the advantage that it lies on the outer surface of literature. Language study is like the mediaeval barons who built castles at the mouths of rivers, and exacted toll of those who wished to pass to their destination in the interior. The Classical languages make a heavy toll for those who are seeking the Classical literatures. For the large majority of those educated in schools and colleges the interpretation of exegesis in Latin and Greek, with its machinery of grammar and dictionary, excludes the interpretation of perspective on which literary culture depends. No doubt there is a minority who, through linguistic aptitude or other advantages, come to read

the foreign languages with ease: for these there is a rich literary culture, though this is combined with loss of perspective for literature in general. For the majority, their literary education has come to an end before it has been in a position to begin. The traditional study has failed, not through its insistence upon the Classical literatures, but through its failure in practice to give the average man or woman any heart knowledge of these literatures.

It has been a foundation principle of this work that we must recognize an outer and an inner study of literature: the inner study is the essential; what of the outer study can be combined with this must be decided for each case as it arises. Language belongs to the outer literary study: we are concerned here with literary art. What this chapter attempts is to indicate some points of practical discrimination in linguistic study, as to where it does and where it does not bear upon literary art.

I

Distinguish:
- Etymology (linguistic science—outer study)
- Metaphorical Vitality of Words (literary art—inner study)

An important point in literary art is the force and vitality of words. But metaphor is a great element in the vitality of a word, and an element that fluctuates with its history. Here then is a point at which linguistic and literary study meet.

Etymology, the history of words, belongs to linguistic study: it is a science of facts and language connections. Of such etymological history only a very small part—as it were the accidents of etymology—has any bearing upon the literary quality of words: but so far as it has relevance it is of high literary importance. Metaphor is one of the principal sources from which the *force* of words, as distinguished from their meaning, is derived: but the metaphorical force of a particular word

depends upon certain stages in its etymological history. After an association of ideas has been brought out, perhaps in the first instance by a simile, and then, becoming more familiar, has been sufficiently expressed by a metaphor, it becomes at length familiar enough to be suggested by a single word, and thus there is a gain to the vocabulary of the language. But as this metaphoric word is more and more used it becomes of wider and wider application, and the clearness of the original metaphor becomes gradually obscured, until often it is entirely lost, and (for aesthetic purposes) the word is dead. Thus the life history of a word may pass through three main stages, which we may think of as the stage of the seed, of the tree, of the wood.

A. The word is a mere token for a particular idea; and so lifeless.

B A. The word is metaphorically applied to a second idea, carrying with it the first idea as an associated image: it is now full of metaphorical vitality.

B. By indiscriminate use of the word in the second significance the associated image is blurred and finally lost; the word is now a lifeless token for the second idea.

So long as a word is a mere token for a particular thing, it has meaning, but nothing of vitality. 'Chair' is a token for one thing, 'table' for another thing; there is no force or beauty in such tokens; if usage permitted the chair might just as well be called a table, and the table a chair. In this token stage words are lifeless, like seed. But, by metaphor, the word may be used to signify a second thing, carrying with it its first significance as an associated image: this association of two significances in a single word fills the word full of metaphorical vitality, and it is a living thing like a tree. But as the word in its new significance is more and more indiscriminately applied, it becomes more and more difficult for it to retain the image of its first meaning: at last this is lost, and the word becomes a life-

less token for what was its second significance, as when a tree has been cut up into wood.

Let us take a particular case, and follow the life history of a highly poetical word.

A. *Vast*=waste, desert

A	(Bohemia and Sicilia) shook hands over a *vast*[1]
	In the dark *vast* and middle of the night[2]
A+B	As *long* as a journey over a *vast*
B A	A *vast* journey (i. e., long, like crossing a desert)
B a	*Vast* sea, *vast* regions
B	*Vast* strides, *vastly* pleased; (the trumpet) sounded through the *vast* of heaven

B. *Vast*=long or big

Originally, *vast* is etymologically identical with *waste*, and signifies a desert or blank space: the two friends in Bohemia and Sicilia can shake hands as if there were only a blank space between; the *vast* of the night is the empty hours when nothing is doing. A simile connects the idea of desert with the idea of length, the two (as always in simile) keeping their distinctness. Then, by metaphor, the word *vast* is made to have the new significance of *long*, keeping its first significance as an image—long, like a journey over a desert; it is beautifully applied by Milton to Chaos in the phrase *vast infinitude* and *vast vacuity*.[3] This is the stage (B A) in which the word has its highest vitality. The next stage (B a) shows *vast*, in its new significance of long, in miscellaneous applications, so that the metaphor of the desert is becoming obscured. At last the metaphor is lost, and *vast* can be used where such an image is impossible: as when we hear of Satan's *vast strides*, or the *vast circumference* of his

[1] *Winter's Tale*, I, i, 32. [2] *Hamlet*, I, ii, 198.

[3] *Paradise Lost*, iii, 711; ii, 932. Note also the striking use of the word in application to the precipitous height of heaven above hell: *vast abrupt* (ii, 409): as if a desert were set up on end.

shield;[1] or when an eighteenth-century hostess is *vastly pleased* to see her guests; we even read of the trumpet sounding through the *vast of heaven*,[2] where least of all things there could be the association of a desert. The word that began by being a token for *desert* has ended by being a mere token for *long:* but the metaphorical transition from the one meaning to the other has yielded stages at which the word possessed a high degree of vital force.

Beauty of poetic language rests very largely upon the way in which poets will use words in their highest stage of metaphorical vitality. I shall be content with a single example of two words, which to us are all but dead, which to Milton are so full of living force that he reserves them for his strongest effects. Etymology shows the word *horrid* at first as a mere token for the idea of *bristling: horrida sus* means a pig with bristles; the helmet of Prince Arthur in the *Faerie Queene*[3] is "horrid all with gold." So, *hideous* in its first etymological stage refers to the creeping of the skin. By a powerful metaphor both words are applied to things dreadful—so dreadful as to cause the hair of the beholder to stand on end, and his flesh to creep. With this overpowering force of suggestion Milton uses the two words. The evil angels fall "with hideous ruin and combustion down to bottomless perdition"; when Satan speaks his first word in Hell he breaks "the horrid silence"; when the word 'death' is first spoken "Hell trembled at the hideous sound"; Moloch imagining the terrors of Hell infinitely intensified expresses these as—

> Impendent horrors, threatening hideous fall
> One day upon our heads.[4]

In modern speech, the conversational slang of our drawing-rooms has so far sapped the vitality of these words that we can

[1] *Paradise Lost*, vi, 109; vi, 256.
[2] *Ibid.*, vi, 203.
[3] I, vii, 31.
[4] *Ibid.*, i, 46, 83; ii, 788; ii, 177.

speak of a lady as horridly dressed, and declare that her hat looked hideous. Two reflections are suggested: the first, that we should beware, in our anxiety for showy talk, lest we become accessories to the massacre of poetic language. The second suggestion is that it would be well if annotations, and other aids to the study of poetry, would discriminate between the mere etymologies with which notes are loaded—nearly the whole of which are without literary significance—and that special side of etymology which makes the foundation for what is a leading beauty of poetic language.

II

Distinguish { Syntax and diction (linguistic grammar—outer study)
Idiom (literary art—inner study)

I pass from single words to the grouping of words in phrases and sentences: what in linguistic grammar is syntax. Here again linguistic study and literary art meet. Our actual speech, like so many other things, seems to be determined by the balance of two opposite forces, centripetal and centrifugal. The centripetal force in language is logic, law, convention: if there were nothing to counteract this we should sink into uniformity and monotony of speech. The centrifugal force in language is idiom: the word is a Greek expression for private property in language. There is the idiom of locality, a part of dialect; there is the idiom of special arts, technical phraseology; there is the idiom of particular authors; last, but not least, there is the delicious idiom of the nursery. It seems to me that the traditions of linguistic science have leaned too exclusively to the conventional side of speech. Grammar began by being wholly conventional: it announced itself as the art of speaking and writing "with propriety." It has traveled far beyond this now, and become a science tracing the principles underlying usage: still, it is mainly established usage that is recognized

by grammar. Yet the analysis of idiom, in all its forms, would yield results of linguistic science equally valuable, and perhaps more important for language considered as a factor in literary art.

The consideration of idiom must include slang, as embryonic idiom, lacking as yet the sanction of established usage. The common tendency to proscribe slang as a whole is, from the point of view of literary art, too indiscriminate in its censure. Great part of the objection to slang is objection on social grounds: in our speech, as in our dress, we owe a measure of deference to conventional usage—how much deference each individual must determine for himself. There is often, moreover, a moral objection to slang: not unfrequently it is only a form of self-indulgence, and the indication of a slipshod soul. When we come to the linguistic and literary objection to slang it becomes necessary to discriminate between the slang that is recuperative and the slang that is detritive in its nature. The latter I have already illustrated in the way in which modern flippancy has worn down the vitality of the words *horrid* and *hideous:* in George Eliot's apt phrase, debasing the moral currency.[1] But other slang is creative in its effect, adding to the vitality of words. When a street urchin calls his hat his 'lid,' we have an example of the same impulse which led early poetry to call the sea the 'swan-bath,' and the human breast the 'bone-locker.' The distinction of the two kinds of slang has been used with effect by George Eliot in *Middlemarch.*[2] The two speakers are Rosamond Vincy, fair embodiment of all proprieties, and Fred Vincy affecting the critical tone of the brother who has been to college.

"Oh, there are so many superior teas and sugars now. Superior is getting to be shopkeeper's slang."

[1] *Theophrastus Such:* title of one of the chapters.

[2] Chapter xi.

"Are you beginning to dislike slang, then?" said Rosamond, with mild gravity.

"Only the wrong sort. All choice of words is slang. It marks a class."

"There is correct English: that is not slang."

"I beg your pardon: correct English is the slang of prigs who write history and essays. And the strongest slang of all is the slang of poets."

"You will say anything, Fred, to gain your point."

"Well, tell me whether it is slang or poetry to call an ox a *leg-plaiter*."

"Of course you can call it poetry if you like."

"Aha, Miss Rosy, you don't know Homer from slang. I shall invent a new game; I shall write bits of slang and poetry on slips, and give them to you to separate."

Established usage must always have a voice in the matter, yet there is no doubt that what I have distinguished as recuperative slang is a force tending to enhance the vitality of language.

III

I pass on to the subject of prosody. Few subjects have been discussed with more elaborateness than this, an elaborateness involving in the highest degree scientific precision and artistic insight.[1] Yet at more than one point, in this discussion of prosody, distinctions have to be made from the point of view of language considered as a factor in literary art.

Distinguish Prosody of
- English as a particular language: this involves the antiquities of English
- English as the medium of world literature

English is a particular language, and one of a family of languages. It has passed through certain historic stages—Anglo-Saxon, Early English, Middle English, Modern English—which,

[1] It is hardly necessary to mention Professor Saintsbury's *History of English Prosody*, in three volumes (Macmillan).

CHART XXVII

Prosody

Elementary Distinction
- Prose = veiled rhythm
- Verse = rhythm recurrent

Struggle in English prose between
- Classical influence of the free period
- Hebraic influence of parallel clauses

Combination of verse and prose in the same rhythmic system

Meter (Classical) resting on
- unit of feet
  - Iamb ⏑ –
  - Trochee – ⏑
  - Dactyl – ⏑ ⏑
  - Anapæst ⏑ ⏑ –
  - etc.
- Combination of feet in lines
  - Modifications of catalexis, anacrusis, caesura
  - Law of dominance

Clause Parallelism (Hebraic)
- Lower unity of couplet (fixed) and strain (elastic)
- Higher unity

Meter / Clause Parallelism meet in stanzas
- Uniform—with variations of duplication, augmentation and diminution, suspension, and interruption—Particular figures like envelope and refrain stanzas
- Antistrophic—alternating, interlacing, introverted—with introductions, conclusions, and odd stanzas

The same verse-mass may reflect more than one underlying rhythm system

Rhythmic Styles as unit in literary prosody
- Sustained meter
- Fixed variations or stanzas
- Free variations or pure lyrics
- Non-metrical rhythm of prose

Principles: (1) Particular meters have little or no literary significance

(2) All *changes* of rhythmic styles have literary significance as reflecting changes of tone or movement

notwithstanding their historic connection, differ from one another, for literary purposes, as much as if they were different languages. The literature contained in the earlier stages of English has little or no bearing upon our world literature,[1] the ancestral sources of which are the Classical and Hebraic literatures and mediaeval Romance. Language study includes the antiquities of English, and the developments of prosody that these involve. When we consider the prosody of English as the vehicle of our world literature, we must remember that the three components of this world literature were characterized by distinctive rhythmic systems. Hellenic literature founded its verse system on meter, a meter depending mainly on syllabic quantity. Hebraic or Biblical literature has a verse that rests upon the parallelism of clauses, a rhythm of thought more than a rhythm of words. In that part of our literary ancestry which in this work has been designated Romance, rhythmic achievements were a considerable factor. To Romance belongs the conclusion of the revolution, begun before the close of the Classical period, by which accent superseded syllabic quantity as the main foundation of meter. To the Middle Ages, again, belongs the development of rhyme,[2] and of minor rhythmic devices such as alliteration and assonance: in these mediaeval developments our earlier English had its share. No prosody of fully developed English literature will be satisfactory that does not recognize—as the three basic principles of our rhythmic system—meter, parallelism of clauses, and rhyme;

[1] Of course, this is a controverted point. Mr. Stopford Brooke's *History of Early English Literature* (Macmillan) may be cited on the other side. It is one of the merits of Mr. Courthope's *History of English Poetry* (Macmillan) that he traces the pedigree of our great poetry through the Classical and Mediaeval periods. (The first two volumes of this history are specially important.)

[2] Goethe has made a great feature of this in the portion of his *Faust* (Second Part, Act III) where Classical and Romantic meet in the persons of Helen and Faust. Compare *World Literature*, pages 272–77.

while alliteration, if not assonance, can claim recognition as a modifying force.

I have noted in the first chapter[1] of this work the elementary rhythmic distinction between prose and verse. Prose is veiled rhythm, verse is rhythm recurrent; prose is presented to the eye in the 'straightforward' printing which the name implies: verse in lines, similar lines being similarly indented. The musical analogue of prose is recitative; of verse, music in time bars, which correspond to the lines of verse. The prose of English literature reflects the influences of its ancestral literatures, Classical and Biblical. There was, it is true, a Romance influence on prose style: but this was temporary. I refer to the inflated style, which in English is called euphuism, which under various names appeared in European languages like an epidemic in the early days of the Renaissance. The great linguistic achievement of the Middle Ages was the evolution of the vernacular languages, Dante and Italian leading the way: an evolution from something like barbarism to a point where modern languages could hold their own with the great languages of antiquity. The inflated style seems a by-product of this process: it seems to be inspired by a joyous sense of attained mastery over sentence formation, a mastery carried to the point of sportiveness in style, until the novelty has died away.

Classical and Hebraic prose are strongly contrasted, as every reader of Scripture feels, when he turns (speaking generally) from the New Testament to the Old, or, in wisdom literature, from the other wisdom books, which are Hebrew, to the Wisdom of Solomon, which is Greek. It may be well to take illustrative passages; and first, an extreme example of Greek style from the Epistle to the Ephesians.[2]

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in

[1] Above, pages 14–15.

[2] Opening of the Epistle.

Christ: even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love: having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved: in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him, I say, in whom also we were made an heritage, having been foreordained according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will; to the end that we should be unto the praise of his glory, we who had before hoped in Christ: in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation,—in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance unto the redemption of God's own possession, unto the praise of his glory.[1]

It will be noted that the whole of this long passage makes a single period: and the period is the unit of prose style. Greek language retains a high degree of inflection, which enables it to correlate clauses in subordination; it also has a large number of conjunctions and other 'particles' that concatenate sentences in definite relations. The two devices make it possible for Greek to articulate closely together a large amount of matter in a single complex period. With this compare a passage from the oratory of Deuteronomy.[2]

Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee

[1] The citation is from the Revised Version, in which the concatenation of sentences in the original Greek is closely followed. Other translations vary much from this.

[2] Deuteronomy 6:4 ff.

this day, shall be upon thy heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thy house, and upon thy gates.

The parallelism of clauses, which was the basis of Hebrew verse, was also a powerful force in its prose: instead of the highly articulated and complex Greek period, we have short periods compounded together, following one another with more or less of parallelism. Take next a passage from Bacon,[1] who feels the influence of Classical literature chiefly in its modified Roman form.

Martin Luther, conducted (no doubt) by an higher providence, but in discourse of reason, finding what a province he had undertaken against the bishop of Rome and the degenerate traditions of the church, and finding his own solitude, being no ways aided by the opinions of his own time, was enforced to awake all antiquity, and to call former times to his succors to make a party against the present time. So that the ancient authors, both in divinity and in humanity, which had long time slept in libraries, began generally to be read and revolved. These by consequence did draw on a necessity of a more exquisite travail in the languages original, wherein those authors did write, for the better understanding of those authors, and the better advantage of pressing and applying their words. And thereof grew again a delight in their manner of style and phrase, and an admiration of that kind of writing; which was much furthered and precipitated by the enmity and opposition that the propounders of those primitive but seeming new opinions had against the schoolmen; who were generally of the contrary part, and whose writings were altogether in a differing style and form; taking liberty to coin and frame new terms of art to express their own sense, and to avoid circuit of speech, without regard to the pureness, pleasantness, and (as I may call

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, First Book, section IV, 2.

it) lawfulness of the phrase or word. And again, because the great labour then was with the people (of whom the Pharisees were wont to say, *Execrabilis ista turba, quae non novit legem*), for the winning and persuading of them, there grew of necessity in chief price and request eloquence and variety of discourse, as the fittest and forciblest access into the capacity of the vulgar sort: so that these four causes concurring, the admiration of ancient authors, the hate of the schoolmen, the exact study of languages, and the efficacy of preaching, did bring in an affectionate study of eloquence and copie of speech, which then began to flourish.

Bacon belongs to the beginning of the modern period: we may see lastly the style of characteristic writers of our own times, such as Macaulay or Greene.

[Elizabeth] was at once the daughter of Henry and of Anne Boleyn. From her father she inherited her frank and hearty address, her love of popularity and of free intercourse with the people, her dauntless courage, and her amazing self-confidence. Her harsh manlike voice, her impetuous will, her pride, her furious outbursts of anger came to her with her Tudor blood. She rated great nobles as if they were schoolboys; she met the insolence of Essex with a box on the ear; she would break, now and then, into the gravest deliberations to swear at her ministers like a fishwife. But strangely in contrast with the violent outlines of her Tudor temper stood the sensuous, self-indulgent nature she derived from Anne Boleyn. Splendour and pleasure were with Elizabeth the very air she breathed. Her delight was to move in perpetual progresses from castle to castle through a series of gorgeous pageants, fanciful and extravagant as a Caliph's dream. She loved gaiety and laughter and wit. A happy retort or a finished compliment never failed to win her favour.[1]

Though particular modern writers—notably Ruskin—can affect the involved period, yet the trend of English style has clearly been toward the triumph of shortened periods following one another with a suggestion of parallelism. The preponderance of the Hebrew over the Greek ideal of style seems one of the

[1] Greene's *Short History of the English People* (Macmillan), page 363.

many things we owe to the widespread influence of the King James Version of the Bible. It often seems to be assumed that the articulated Greek style is a more exact and higher instrument of thought than the 'looser' style of modern English. But this seems to me highly disputable. The precise compacting of clauses and sentences by inflections and definite particles is in part a limitation of thought. The asyndeton of English style leaves the members of a paragraph to *suggest* their mutual connection. From the point of view of literary art, the appeal to the suggestive may be a higher effect than definite determination.

An interesting question of linguistic mechanics is the combination of prose and verse in what, rhythmically, is a common system. The analogy of music is wholly in its favor: strict as is the measuring of time in music, there is at any point the possibility of recitative, during which all time is suspended, after which strict time is resumed. The verse of Classical poetry, founded on the meter of syllabic quantity, does not admit the union of prose and verse. In Biblical verse, the metrical system of which rests on clause parallelism, the overlapping of verse and prose is a prominent feature. The two can be combined in the same unit of recurrence.

I

The Lord sent a word into Jacob,
And it hath lighted upon Israel.

And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in pride and in stoutness of heart,

The bricks are fallen,
But we will build with hewn stone;
The sycamores are cut down,
But we will change them into cedars.

Therefore the Lord shall set up on high against him the adversaries of Rezin, and shall stir up his enemies; the Syrians before,

and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth.

For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand is stretched out still!

2

Yet the people have not turned unto him that smote them,
Neither have they sought the LORD of hosts.

Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, palm-branch and rush, in one day.

The ancient and the honourable man,
He is the head;
And the prophet that teacheth lies,
He is the tail.

For they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. Therefore the Lord shall not rejoice over their young men, neither shall he have compassion on their fatherless and widows: for everyone is profane and an evil-doer, and every mouth speaketh folly.

For all this his anger is not turned away,
But his hand is stretched out still.

(This rhythmic pattern is four times repeated.[1]) Prose and verse can also combine in alternation. The doom form—so important in prophecy—is made up of recitative prose interrupted at intervals with lyric passages: the recitative passages are found to draw together into a continuous monologue, usually by a divine speaker, while the interrupting lyrics celebrate point by point what the speech of Deity has advanced.[2] In

[1] Isa. 9:8—10:4. The whole is given (in structural form) in the *Modern Reader's Bible;* or in *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 370–71.

[2] The doom form is fully discussed in *Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 123–28, and again in chapter xvii (more briefly in the *Modern Reader's Bible*, pages 1531–32).

English poetry, it would seem as if criticism had acted as a restraining force against this overlapping of prose and verse. The traditional English prosody is an adaptation of Classical prosody to a language in which accent has replaced syllabic quantity: such a conception of prosody has naturally been unfavorable to the union of prose with verse. Indeed, it seems to have relegated it to comic or farcical verse.

Deserted (as you will remember, Mr. Venus) by the waning moon
When stars (it will occur to you before I mention it) proclaim night's cheerless noon,
On tower, fort, or tented ground,
The sentry walks his lonely round.

The exception is that small part of English poetry in which the verse is based upon parallelism of clauses. The poetry of Walt Whitman is the great example: his rhythm—measured in clause parallelism—is strict and forcible, yet clearly at times admits the principle of recitative suspension. I cite passages,[1] taking the liberty to indicate by brackets the recitative effect.

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your feet and hands,
Even now your features [joys, speech, house, trade, manners, troubles, follies, costume, crimes] dissipate away from you.
Your true soul and body appear before me,
They stand forth out of affairs [out of commerce, shops, work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating, drinking, suffering, dying]
Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be my poem,
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better than you.

. . . . . .

[1] From Walt Whitman's *Birds of Passage:* "To You."

The mockeries are not for you,
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,
I pursue you where none else has pursued you,
[Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustomed routine] if these conceal you from others or from yourself, they do not conceal you from me.
[The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion] if these balk others they do not balk me,
[The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed, premature death] all these I part aside.

As the analogy of music so strongly suggests, it is a serious narrowing of prosody to make no provision for the rhythmic interlocking of verse and prose.

Meter, in the stricter sense of the term that prevails in Classical prosody, is the measuring of rhythm in *feet*, which are the ultimate unit; the combination of feet in the larger unit of the *line;* and of lines in the larger unit of the *stanza.* There is, moreover, variety in the rhythmic character of the ultimate feet, with such differences as iambic, trochaic, dactylic, anapaestic, and the like, which are familiar, and can be caught by the least sensitive ear. Such rhythmic variety extends to the combination of feet in lines, and we get iambic, trochaic, anapaestic lines. At this point certain modifying forces are recognized, which add much to the flexibility of a metrical system. Two of these modifying forces are catalexis and anacrusis. The first is a recognition that a particular line may, without disturbance to the general rhythm, be defective at the end: thus, in a sequence of four-trochee lines, the last trochee is broken short:

Háste thee, Nýmph, and bríng with thée
Jést and yoúthful Jóllitý.

Anacrusis recognizes redundant syllable or syllables at the beginning of a line: thus, in the same system, we can have:

And || ádd to thése retíred Leísure,
That || ín trim gárdens tákes his pléasure.

The modifying force of these two devices taken together is such that the same particular line may be scanned in different ways; for example, as dactylic with catalexis at the end:

Thére was a | dwélling of | kíngs ere the | wórld was | wáxen | óld

or as anapaestic with anacrusis at the beginning:

There || was a dwèl|ling of kìngs | ere the wòrld | was wàx|en òld.

A third modifying force in meter is the caesura, the technical name for the natural cleavage of longer lines. The caesura serves as break and for relief. It also serves for variety: every reader knows how Milton and Spenser will delicately vary the caesura in successive lines. An interesting use of this device is found in the ballad hexameter which we associate with William Morris' *Sigurd*, and which is used by Mr. Way with such effect in his translations of Classical hexameters.[1] This always has a caesura in the middle of the line: but the caesura is often used for a kind of recitative effect, the rhythm being suspended for the interjection of one, or occasionally two, redundant syllables —a sort of anacrusis in the center of a line:

Though e'én in that wórld's begín(ning) rose a múrmur nów and agáin
Of the mídward tíme and the fád(ing) and the lást of the látter dáys.
Thou shalt drink of the cúp of awák(ening) that thine hánd hath hólpen to fíll.

But the most important principle affecting the compounding of feet into lines is what may be called the law of dominance. When a sequence of verse is described as iambic, or trochaic, or anapaestic, the meaning is that the iambic, or trochaic, or anapaestic rhythm *dominates* the passage as a whole: other kinds of feet may replace at any point the iamb, or trochee,

[1] Arthur Way's translations of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (Macmillan) and of the *Argonautica* (in Temple Classics).

or anapaest, provided that the dominant rhythm is not broken. English blank verse is classified as iambic pentameter: this clearly describes the rhythm of a mass of such blank verse, though at particular parts of particular lines almost any other foot may be found. Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* constitute a single poem in two contrasted halves. The meter of the whole (apart from two introductory passages) is trochaic tetrameter. Particular couplets of the poem, if isolated from their context, might be scanned as iambic:

> But cóme, thou góddess, fáir and frée,
> In héav'n yclépt Euphrósyné.

But the trochaic swing of the whole poem shows that these lines must be scanned as trochaic with the modifications of anacrusis and catalexis:

> But || cóme, thou góddess, fáir and frée,
> In || héav'n yclépt Euphrósyné.

This law of dominance is a fundamental consideration of prosody in its bearing upon literary effect.

Our other ancestral literature, the Hebraic Bible, introduces quite a different rhythmic system, based upon the parallelism of clauses.[1] We recognize a lower and a higher unity: the first involving only adjacent lines, the higher unity correlating on the basis of parallelism the most distant parts of an elaborate poem. Two units make the basis of the system. One is the couplet:

> The LORD of Hosts is with us;
> The God of Jacob is our refuge.

[1] A full exposition of this in *Literary Study of the Bible*, chapter i–iii, and Appendix III. Much the same treatment will be found in the *Modern Reader's Bible* (one-volume edition), pages 1517–32. The structural system so expounded is carried out in the text of the *Modern Reader's Bible*, and particular points of metrical effect are treated in the notes.

The other has been called the strain: this is an elastic unit, consisting of a couplet either line of which may be strengthened by a supporting clause, but not both.

> Strive thou, O LORD, with them that strive with me:
> Fight thou against them that fight against me.
>
> Take hold of shield and buckler and stand up for my help:
> Draw out also the spear and stop the way against those that pursue me:
> Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.
>
> Let destruction come upon him at unawares;
> And let the net that he hath hid catch himself;
> Into that very destruction let him fall.

All three are strains: the first is a simple couplet; the second is a couplet with the first line strengthened; the third has the second line strengthened. The fixed and the varying unit prevail in different classes of Biblical poetry.

When we pass on to the highest unit of the stanza, it would appear that the stricter metrical prosody inspired by Classical literature, and the metrical system founded upon clause parallelism, to a large extent coalesce. In modern English the more familiar conception of stanzas is that of uniform stanzas, uniform for a whole poem or large section of a poem. To this both Classical and Biblical verse add the further conception of stanzas running in pairs, strophe and antistrophe: the two strophes of a pair agree minutely in rhythm, but the rhythm may altogether change between one pair of strophes and another. The mutual relation of stanzas admits a large variety of elaborations. Antistrophic stanzas may be alternating, or interlacing, or united by the beautiful effect of introversion; they may have introductions and conclusions, and be varied by epodes or odd stanzas. Stanzas otherwise uniform may be varied by regular duplications, by augmenting and diminution. There are the general effects of suspension and interruption; particular figures

like the envelope figure, particular devices such as the refrain. This is not the place to discuss these in detail;[1] it is enough to recognize the principle that in verse, as in other music, the ideal is to attain the highest elasticity of treatment without losing the rhythmic step.

In this connection it becomes desirable to lay down the general principle that the same poem, or verse-mass, may have more than one underlying rhythmic system, though one such system will usually be dominant. The verse of the Bible (we have seen) is founded on parallelism. Yet it is a matter of controversy among scholars whether the original Hebrew has not also a metrical system. If such a metrical system be established, this can make no difference of any kind to the system of parallel clauses, which stands self-evidenced and independent. The very early poetry of the *Kalevala* has in the original a clear meter (imitated in translations), but also exhibits parallelism of clauses to an almost equal extent. Even the highly metrical verse of modern English poetry is not inconsistent with other bases of rhythm. Few metrical units are as defined as the stanzas of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, yet occasionally we find passages of that poem which are equally clear schemes of clause parallelism. I instance a particular stanza[2] printed on both systems. First, it may be seen as a metrical stanza.

> Wrath, jealousy, grief, love, do thus expell:
> Wrath is a fire; and jealousy a weed;
> Grief is a flood; and love a monster fell;
> The fire of sparks, the weed of little seed,
> The flood of drops, the monster filth did breed:
> But sparks, seed, drops, and filth, do thus delay;
> The sparks soon quench, the springing seed outweed,
> The drops dry up, and filth wipe clean away:
> So shall wrath, jealousy, grief, love, die and decay.

[1] They are fully discussed in the exposition of Biblical meter mentioned in the note to page 475.

[2] *Faerie Queene*, II, iv, 35.

Next, it may be presented as a system of clause parallelism.

Wrath, jealousy, grief, love, do thus expell:
Wrath is a fire;
And jealousy a weed;
Grief is a flood;
And love a monster fell;
The fire of sparks,
The weed of little seed,
The flood of drops,
The monster filth did breed:
But sparks, seed, drops, and filth, do thus delay;
The sparks soon quench,
The springing seed outweed,
The drops dry up,
And filth wipe clean away:
So shall wrath, jealousy, grief, love, die and decay.

In another illustration from the same poem,[1] the limits of the stanza are transcended, and parts of two stanzas blend in a beautiful scheme of introverted parallelism.

Birds, voices, instruments, winds, waters, all agree:
The joyous birds, shrouded in cheerful shade,
Their notes unto the voice attempered sweet;
Th' angelical soft trembling voices made
To th' instruments divine respondence meet:
The silver sounding instruments did meet
With the base murmur of the waters fall;
The waters fall with difference discreet
Now soft, now loud, unto the wind did call:
The gentle warbling wind low answerèd to all.

We have here the envelope figure of parallelism: what the first line advances is by the last line carried to completion; between come the detailed clauses in introversion—*a b b c c d d e*. The whole is a masterpiece of thought reflected in rhythm.

[1] *Faerie Queene*, II, xii, 70–71.

IV

All that has so far been touched upon concerns the elements of linguistic rhythm. It is preliminary to what appears the most important consideration of language as a factor in literary art.

Distinguish
- Prosody (mainly linguistic—outer study)
- Literary Significance of Rhythmic Changes (inner study)

The technique of prosody belongs in the main to the science and art of language. On the other hand, there is one aspect of what may be called prosody which has a distinct place in the inmost study of literature; it seems to be so little noticed in ordinary treatments of prosody that I do not know any generally accepted term by which it may be expressed; but I will call it the literary significance of rhythmic changes. The rhythmic changes I have in mind are interchanges between rhythmic styles. Meters and rhythms are innumerable: but the rhythmic styles may be summed up as four in number.

Four Rhythmic Styles:

1. Sustained Meter, such as Blank Verse, Heroic Couplets, Terza Rima: where the same unit is maintained for the whole of a poem or section of a poem.
2. Fixed Variations, or Stanzas: changes of meter in successive lines but with recurrence in groups or stanzas.
3. Free Variations, or Pure Lyrics: unlimited change of meter in successive lines.
4. Non-metrical rhythm of prose.

Using this nomenclature we may lay down two principles.

A. Particular *meters* have little, if any,[1] literary significance.

B. All *changes* of rhythmic style have literary significance, as reflecting changes of tone or movement.

[1] For what might seem exceptions, see *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 306–13.

Take a simple passage from Tennyson.

Airy, fairy, Lilian,
Flitting, fairy Lilian,
When I ask her if she love me,
Clasps her tiny hands above me,
Laughing all she can;
She'll not tell me if she love me,
Cruel little Lilian.

When my passion seeks
Pleasance in love-sighs,
She, looking thro' and thro' me
Thoroughly to undo me,
Smiling, never speaks;
So innocent-arch, so cunning-simple,
From beneath her gathered wimple,
Glancing with black-beaded eyes,
Till the lightning laughters dimple
The baby-roses in her cheeks;
Then away she flies.

Every ear catches the daintiness of the verse; and at first one is inclined to say that the effect is largely due to the meter employed. Yet this same meter (of trochaic tetrameter) is used to convey sentiment as opposite as can be conceived.

Day of wrath! O day of mourning!
See fulfilled the prophet's warning!
Heaven and earth to ashes burning!

O what fear man's bosom rendeth!
When from heaven the Judge descendeth,
On whose sentence all dependeth!

Of course, within the limits of the particular meter there is variety of treatment—use of anacrusis and catalexis, relief of longer by shorter lines—in different parts of the poems; but the particular meter chosen for the two contrasting lyrics is the same. Or, take an example from Milton, who is a supreme

master of rhythmic effects. In his *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the essential point is to weigh in equal poise two contrasting sentiments, the bright and the somber sides of life. What is the metrical treatment? The same meter (trochaic tetrameter) serves to express each of the opposing tones. On the other hand, where each half of the poem opens by dismissing the opposite spirit before it settles down to the spirit it is itself to express, we find that the introductory lines are in a different rhythmic style: in free lyrics, instead of sustained meter.

Hence loathed Melancholy,
Of Cerberus, and blackest Midnight born,
In Stygian cave forlorn
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy;
Find out some uncouth cell,
Where brooding Darkness spreads his jealous wings,
And the night-raven sings;
There under ebon shades, and low-brow'd rocks,
As ragged as thy locks,
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.

But come thou goddess fair and free,
In Heav'n yclep'd Euphrosyne,
And by men, heart-easing Mirth;
etc.

This poem illustrates both our principles at once: the same particular meter is used for sentiments of opposite significance; but a change of tone in the body of the poem reflects itself in a change of rhythmic style.

It is a marked phenomenon in all great literatures, this use of rhythmic changes to reflect changes in tone, or movement, or atmosphere.[1] Yet it seems to have attracted so little attention

[1] In my own writings I have illustrated this important principle: in *Ancient Classical Drama*, pages 86–92, 303–17, 401–9, 438–44; and in *Shakespeare as Artist*, pages 349–55. (Part of this is incorporated in the discussion above.) In Biblical literature, the foundation of the whole metrical

that, until recently, translators have for the most part neglected it.[1] It is a specially notable feature in the episodes of Greek Tragedy and Comedy, where the variation is between what may be called blank verse[2] and free lyrics. Here the rhythmic changes have additional accentuation in the well-known fact that, in Greek drama, blank verse (*logos*) was only spoken, whereas lyric passages (*melos*) were chanted or sung: there is thus the interchange between what in modern phrase would be drama and opera. It is remarkable what powerful and subtle changes of spirit these rhythmic changes reflect. Take a simple illustration from the *Alcestis*. The noble bearing of the queen on the morning of her day of self-sacrifice has been described by the Attendant in blank verse, when the palace door opens, and Alcestis is borne out with signs of approaching death in her face: at once there is a change to chanted lyrics. But in the course of this death scene Alcestis suddenly rallies her strength at the thought of a duty she has forgotten—to provide for the future of her children; this part of the scene expresses itself in blank verse. The episode of the return from the tomb commences with lyric dialogue chanted between Admetus and the Chorus who seek to console him: but their remark that if Admetus has lost a spouse he has gained his life seems to jar upon the feelings of the widowed king, and as he turns round to resent the suggestion the lyrics give place to blank verse. To take another play. The finale to the *Aga-*

system involves the principle that variations of meter reflect variations of thought: illustrations will be found *passim* in my discussions of Biblical meters (*Literary Study of the Bible*, pages 534–56; *Modern Reader's Bible*, pages 1517–30, and notes to Job and Song of Songs).

[1] The translations of A. S. Way, Gilbert Murray, Lewis Campbell, B. K. Rogers, F. J. Miller, and Plumptre may usually be relied upon to reflect these changes.

[2] Blank verse in Greek is longer than the English blank verse by one additional iamb.

memnon opens in blank verse: Clytaemnestra in affected calmness advises Cassandra to yield to her destiny, and join the family sacrifice. When Clytaemnestra has withdrawn, the prophetic afflatus begins to come upon Cassandra: at first we have snatches of song, and then sustained wild lyrics. The Chorus at first do not understand, and bear their part in the dialogue in quiet blank verse; when Cassandra's words become unmistakable, the Chorus catch the excitement, and the whole scene becomes lyric music. Suddenly, there is a change to blank verse: it is that Cassandra has realized that her doom is inevitable, and in dialogue with the amazed Chorus she moves calmly to the scene of her death. When, later, the machinery of the roller-stage suddenly displays Clytaemnestra, blood-stained, standing over the corpses of her victims, blank verse conveys the cool exultation of the queen over her long-meditated vengeance, and the bewilderment of those who look on. But soon the natural horror of the scene seizes the Chorus, and their words become lyric song; the murderess for a while maintains blank verse and unnatural coolness, but soon she also is swept into the stream of lyric excitement. Yet the culmination of the incident is in blank verse: as Ægisthus, triumphant, is added to the scene, with his display of force at his back. But suddenly the Chorus catch the significance of Cassandra's vision, up to that point hidden from them: the moment that the name of Orestes—fate-appointed avenger—is mentioned, the tone of the whole situation is reversed. The changed tone appears, in this case not in a change to lyrics, but from blank verse to a different type of sustained meter, and the long rolling lines of accelerated rhythm maintain themselves to the end of the play.[1]

In the Shakespearean drama, besides the interchange between blank verse, rhyme, and lyrics, we have the still more effective interchange of verse and prose. In the whole technique of

[1] The reader can follow these changes in the original text of the plays, or in such translations as those mentioned in note 1 on page 482.

Shakespeare nothing is more noticeable than these significant changes of rhythmic style.

Every play will furnish illustrations: we may instance *The Tempest.* The opening confusion—with mariners and passengers jostling one another in the storm—expresses itself in prose; at the sudden cry, "All lost! to prayers! to prayers!" the shock brings a rise to blank verse. Yet there is one personage present who can see a humorous side even to this situation: Gonzalo's bit of humor falls to prose.

> Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground, long heath, brown furze, anything. The wills above be done! but I would fain die a dry death.

Inside the enchanted island, the presence of Prospero the enchanter maintains an even atmosphere of blank verse wherever he is present. In one scene (II, 2) Caliban, fresh from an encounter with Prospero, is pouring out his execrations in blank verse: the entrance of the drunken sailors changes the spirit of the scene, and prose dominates. Yet not entirely: the sailors have forced alcoholic liquor down the throat of Caliban, and as he feels the novel elation of mind he breaks from prose to verse—

> These be fine things, an if they be not sprites:
> That's a brave god, and bears celestial liquor.

Under this influence Caliban continues to speak verse amid the surrounding prose; until complete drunkenness finds expression in rude lyrics:

> No more dams I'll make for fish;
> Nor fetch in firing
> At requiring;
> Nor scrape trencher, nor wash dish:
> Ban, ban, Cacaliban
> Has a new master; get a new man.

We have the same personages in a later scene (IV, 1 from line 194): here Caliban, in excitement over the conspiracy against Prospero's life, maintains blank verse; while the sailors, too sodden with drink to remember their purpose, talk prose.

The first scene of the second act of this play makes a fine study for rhythmic variations. The main thread of the scene is Gonzalo's kindly attempts to console the afflicted king: this is in blank verse. But in asides—perfectly audible to Gonzalo—Antonio and Sebastian are mocking his efforts: the mockery makes an undercurrent of prose. At last (from line 49) the irritation of this mockery depresses Gonzalo's speech to prose, and prose continues until the king speaks:

> You cram these words into mine ears against
> The stomach of my sense.

Now all becomes verse, as Antonio and Sebastian taunt the king, and Gonzalo continues his attempts at consolation, though with interruptions of prose ejaculations. The king again expresses impatience:

> Prithee, no more: thou dost talk nothing to me.

Now Gonzalo turns upon his tormentors, and the whole becomes prose: until the sudden spell of enchantment changes altogether the nature of the scene, and blank verse has full course to the end.

Just one more illustration may be added. There is one short section of *The Tempest* which stands apart from the rest of the play: it is the Masque of the Spirit Actors,[1] raised by the spells of Prospero—a play within a play. This masque is metrically marked off from the rest of the poem by the use of rhyme: even the comments of the on-lookers are in a different meter.

The questions that have here been discussed constitute, of course, only a small part of the whole science of prosody; and

[1] IV, i, 60–138.

prosody itself is only a single element in the study of language. The responsibility in this chapter is only for those points in which the study of language and the study of literature overlap. There is no authority that can determine whether linguistic or literary study is the more important: each represents an independent province of culture. The danger is—as the history of literary study abundantly proves—lest the student who is not alive to the distinction between the inner and the outer study of literature may, by giving free course to linguistic analysis, be led to neglect that very part of linguistic study which undeniably concerns literature.

CONCLUSION

THE TRADITIONAL AND THE MODERN STUDY OF LITERATURE

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In bringing this work to a conclusion I desire, in the briefest space, to sum up the salient points of the general argument.

The study of literature might set up a plausible claim to be the foremost of studies, in the sense that it has been the mother country from which all other studies have set out as colonies. Yet there is a widespread feeling that literary study has fallen behind some other studies of front rank. I believe that there is some foundation for this impression: that traditions of literary study, dating from as early a time as the Renaissance, have acted as a retarding force, and have made the study of literature less sensitive than it ought to have been to the vivifying spirit of modern thought.

It seems obviously unsound that the study of literature should have fallen into departmental studies of particular literatures, with little attention to the interrelation of these literatures, and with almost no attention to the conception of literature as a whole. The unity of literature, which should be the basis of all literary study whether on a larger or smaller scale, is not to be sought in the mere aggregation of separate literatures, but in the perspective view of the whole which in this work has been formulated as world literature. This conception of world literature is not a practical compromise, any more than a map is a compromising view of a country. Nothing in universal literature is outside world literature: but the perspective attitude enables each particular reader to catch the relative proportions and the mutual relations of whatever portions of literature present themselves to his attention.

This world literature is the natural center of the Humanity studies: it reflects the evolution of civilization, as national

literatures reflect the histories of the nations. The basis on which the whole of the Humanity studies should rest is the combination of Hellenic and Hebraic civilizations, and the outcome of their gradual coalescence in mediaeval Romance. Traditional literary study has taken in only the Classical factor. For a long time it endeavored to treat the Romantic as antagonistic to Classical, and not as its natural supplement. And the Hebraic factor it has ignored altogether, and been content to leave the Bible itself to the chapter-and-verse travesty of literary form which unliterary mediaeval commentators had imparted to it. This has been the most serious of all errors in the traditional study of literature: the matter of the Bible, with its immense spiritual importance, has been lost to academic culture; and criticism has been cramped by the ignoring of the original and beautiful Hebraic literary forms, which would have been the natural corrective to an Aristotelian theory that had only a single literature to draw from.

The necessity of constantly recognizing the distinction between the outer and the inner study of literature is another application of perspective to the field of our study. All that constitutes the outer study, it is admitted, has some bearing upon literature. But where the distinction is not kept in view, the danger is that the reader may be forever occupied with knowing about literature, instead of actually knowing it. For the intrinsic study of literature the question is, not the origins of literature, but the literature itself: the origins, only so far as they elucidate the literature. It is concerned, not with the relations of literature to particular peoples or epochs, but with some catholic grasp of literature, and with particular histories only so far as they assist this catholic view. It is occupied, not with individual literary productions, but with literary types and their interrelations: and with the particular productions only so far as they illustrate the types. In a word, its main interest is, not in literary history, but in literary evolution: in

literary history only as the field in which literary evolution appears. It has not the responsibility of recording literary products—this belongs to the history of particular peoples—but seeks to interpret the record: and deals with particular literary works only in proportion as they assist in interpreting the record.

But we must not stop here. Literary study not only interprets the record, but seeks to interpret the conception of literature itself. The conception of literature as a whole: the interpretation of which is criticism. And the conception of the varieties of form in which literature clothes itself: this is literary morphology, with its fundamental principle that literary form is the key to interpretation of matter and spirit. The traditional study at the outset assumed a false attitude toward these forms of literature: the paramount position at the moment of Classical poetry led naturally to the idea that the forms of this poetry were limiting models, defining once for all literary types. In the phraseology followed in this work, a static had been substituted for an evolutionary attitude toward poetic form; the fallacy of kinds conceived the type as governing the composition, in contradistinction to the view of literary types that unfold themselves as the literature evolves, and elements of literary form adapted by their very nature for combination and fusion. As a result of this false position, sympathetic appreciation stiffened into judgment, and interpretation was ready to set itself in antagonism to that which it was to interpret. Of such a state of things the only outcome could be controversy; and we have seen how for a long period the history of criticism has been a controversial confusion, under which the only law seemed to be the triumph of creative authors over the criticism which had sought to restrain them.

The whole attitude to art of appreciation was involved. The idea had in some way arisen that art was something different from nature: it was an 'artificial' product, working under the

correction of theory and criticism. The turning-point is found where it is perceived that art is a part of nature: the artist, and the processes by which he works, are comprehended in the processes of nature. Art appreciation seeks its laws in art production. The change of attitude stands fully revealed in the evolutionary theory of taste which we associate with the Wordsworth controversy: appreciation adjusting itself to the evolution of creative literature, as each new departure in poetry creates a new departure in taste. Thus, a difference as great as that between the modern and the older geocentric conception of the universe separates the modern from the traditional literary study: tradition has expected the literature to adjust itself to the critic; the modern attitude—approaching art as nature—seeks to adjust the reader to the literature. One practical corollary from this is the necessity of repeated readings and study before the reader can keep up with the poets who are pioneers in art. Analysis of poetry in this spirit has been illustrated in the Grammar of Literary Art which makes one section of the present work.

In all that has been said there is nothing derogatory to the idea of judicial criticism. The error of traditional study has been that this single element of criticism was allowed to usurp the whole field, and change the meaning of criticism to mere judgment. There was thus no room for the criticism of pure interpretation, on which all other criticism must rest. When this is once recognized, there is an ample field left for judicial criticism. Man seeks to control nature, but only by principles which are themselves natural; so criticism can restrain production, but on principles which only creative art will justify or condemn. There will always exist a criticism of values. But the distinction must never be forgotten between values and valuations; matters of technique can be precisely appraised, but things which have the highest of values least admit of valuation. No one has attempted to make a calculus of faith,

hope, and charity. And the history of judicial criticism will be, essentially, a history of critics. This last consideration, however, widens into another of considerable importance. Pronouncements upon literature, independently of their theorectic soundness, will have a literary value of their own: subjective criticism is the literature of appreciation.

Thus, in the modern reconstruction of criticism three types of criticism have already been noticed: to these a fourth type must be added. The formal literary theory that belongs to traditional study has in this work been restated as speculative criticism. Nothing that has been said is hostile to the use of a priori reasoning in the discussion of literature. It is, however, one of the difficulties of a priori reasoning that the smallest of errors made at the start may throw all that follows out of gear. It has been contended in this work that a fundamental error of this kind has affected traditional literary theory. Aristotle's definition of poetry as *techne mimetike* involves an ambiguity: it has been traditionally understood—to express the difference in English—as *imitation*, instead of *creation*. The true conception of poetry and the other arts bases them on a special creative faculty. The products of this creative faculty constitute an independent interpretation of reality, independent of the interpretation that comes from science, yet equally true, with a different truth of its own. Moreover, what we are accustomed to consider reality is itself an interpretation: an interpretation of things made by science through its own special faculty, which we call rationalization. In this way literature becomes a part of philosophy as well as a mode of art.

One consequence from this is that the subject-matter of poetry becomes not less important than poetic art. So long as poetry is conceived as mere imitation, the emphasis is shifted from the matter to the manner of performance; more and more the spirit of connoisseurship turns from deeper things to delicate *nuances* of effect. If poetry is creation, the subject-matter

takes the center of the field. This theoretic consideration is supported by historic fact. Science as it progresses becomes involved in an ever-increasing specialization. But one important subject of thought by its very nature is incompatible with specialization: this is human life as a concrete whole. It is thus literature that serves as the science and practical art of life: story (we have seen) is a mode of interpretative thinking, and in the study of human nature fiction is the counterpart of what in natural science is experiment and observational apparatus.

But literature is more than the criticism of life. The interpretation of things that comes from poetry and art is a higher interpretation, in the sense that, at one and the same time, it interprets and creates. Poetic idealization enhances what it touches, but enhances only by first interpreting. The nature revealed by science is a lesser thing than the nature on which creative poetry has operated. Once more we have the distinction of static and evolutionary: the creation of the universe did not come to an end in some mystic past, but is going on now and forever, as man in poetry is re-creating nature. The creative faculty is assumed for the appreciation of poetry and art, as well as for the producer. Every lover of poetry is himself a poet; and there is much of poetry in the world that never embodies itself in art creations.

The first and last word in literary theory is interpretation. The criticism of inductive interpretation is the basis on which all other criticism rests: only as the reader verifies his conceptions by observation of the literature can he become a judge; only as the theorist has interpreted the evolution of literary forms can he even understand the literature they embody. And the literary art he thus seeks to interpret is itself the creative interpretation of nature and human life.

SYLLABUS

GENERAL INDEX

WORKS OF THE AUTHOR REFERRED TO
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SYLLABUS

INTRODUCTION—DOMINANT IDEAS OF MODERN STUDY

Unity: the application of perspective to the field of the study as a whole.

Induction: verification of principles by observation of subject-matter as a final test to which results (however attained) must ultimately be referred.

Evolution: distinction between a static habit of mind, seeking fixed principles which will be universal, and an evolutionary mental attitude, tending to interpret things as manifestations of an underlying process.

In regard to all three of these ideas the study of literature is less advanced than other studies of front rank.

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True view.—(1) Any subject-matter may be raw material for poetic treatment. (2) But the treatment transforms the matter: which thus becomes of equal importance with poetic art. (3) The only basis of poetry is creation—creation in verse and creation in prose are two species of poetry—the alternative view an accident of literary history.

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Theoretic importance of this view as giving definiteness to the idea of literary evolution: The origin of literary species lies in the differentiation of the conventional.

(The 'conventional' as a tacit understanding between production and appreciation—the conventional separates art from reality—separates the different arts from one another—separates between the different genera of a particular art—separates, finally, the species of a genus: A literary species constituted by all the works in which the conventional is the same.)

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TRADITIONAL	MODERN
Departmental study of separate literatures without regard to their interrelations.	World literature: literature, irrespective of division between languages, seen in perspective from the national point of view.
Recognition mainly of the Classical factor—total ignoring of Biblical —its spiritual import lost to academic culture—loss also of a natural corrective to Classical limitations.	World literature as the reflection of our civilization—resting on the three factors, Classical, Biblical, Romantic.
Outer study (miscellaneous applications of literature) allowed to crowd out the Inner study of literature itself.—The emphasis on literary history.	Intrinsic study of the literature itself the main interest—the Outer study only so far as it assists the Inner.—The emphasis on literary evolution.
Purely static conception of literary morphology—fallacy of kinds, as if early forms dominated future literature.	Evolutionary conception: forms undergoing modifications and fusion as literature develops—these forms the key to interpretation of matter and spirit.
Literary art: art conceived as 'artificial,' working under correction of criticism—criticism thus limited to criticism of judicial comparison.	Art as part of Nature: evolution of taste adjusting itself to evolution of production—judicial criticism presupposes criticism of pure interpretation.—But all criticism has an independent value as history of appreciation.
Literary theory vitiated at the outset by confusion between *imitation* and *creation* in application to poetry.	Poetry and art an independent interpretation of things resting on a special creative faculty, as science rests upon its special faculty of rationalization—the creative faculty postulated for both production and appreciation.
The basic idea of poetry as imitation shifted the emphasis from the matter of poetry to poetic art—and increasingly to the smaller points of poetic art.	Subject-matter of literature equally important with literary art—literature the science and practical art of human life—with fiction as its experimental side.

Literature is further a higher interpretation of life and nature, at once creating and interpreting.

The root idea of literary study is interpretation: to interpret a literary art, which is itself a creative interpretation of nature and human life.

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Referred to in the Preceding Pages

World Literature: and Its Place in General Culture. Published by Macmillan (price in America, $1.75 net; in England, 7*s.* 6*d.*).

The Modern Reader's Bible: Books of the Bible (including three books of the Apocrypha) edited in full literary structure: with copious introductions and notes. Issued in two different forms: (1) complete in one volume (1,733 pages), published by Macmillan (price in America: cloth $2.00 net; morocco $5.00 net; price in England: cloth 10*s.* net; leather 12*s.* 6*d.* net). (2) in twenty-one small volumes, published by Macmillan; volumes sold separately; Genesis, The Exodus, Deuteronomy, The Judges, The Kings, The Chronicles; The Psalms and Lamentations (two volumes), Biblical Idylls (one volume, containing Solomon's Song, Ruth, Esther, Tobit); Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the Minor Prophets; Proverbs, Ecclesiasticus, Ecclesiastes and Wisdom of Solomon, Job; St. Matthew (with St. Mark and the General Epistles), St. Luke and St. Paul (two volumes), St. John (price of each volume: in America, 50 cents [cloth], 60 cents [leather], net; price in England, 2*s.* 6*d.*).

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GENERAL INDEX

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